Dungeon®

ADVENTURES FOR TSR [illegible] GAMES

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Bane of the Shadowborn

by William W. Connors

Dungeon®

ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

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COVER: Kateri Shadowborn was too trusting when she accepted the evil sentient sword Ebonbane. Robin Wood depicts the final battle between the paladin and her nemesis in this month's cover painting for "Bane of the Shadowborn."

Packing to Go

In the middle of June, I packed to go on an adventure. Player characters regularly spend years in the forests and mountains, with nothing but whatever they can stuff in a backpack and tie behind the saddle of a horse. I would be gone for only two days (and I had a station wagon).

I was going to the wilds of Dodgeville, Wisconsin, to take part in Interphaze 3, a live-action role-playing game. Part of the deal was camping out for *one night*. I was determined to bring only what I absolutely needed. Here's the packing list, with my thoughts on what "real" adventurers would have packed:

—Tent, ground cloth, air mattress, sleeping bag, pillow. (Real adventurers just roll up in their cloaks on the hard ground, when they can't find an inn.)

—Ice chest, pop, fruit, cheese, bread, cookies, water skin. (Real adventurers subsist on iron rations and the products of *create food and water* spells when not living off the land.)

—One cloak and two tunics for the outdoor adventure, and one nice gown for Saturday's feast. (While on the road, real adventurers will skip the fancy clothes. A cloak and one change of clothing, if that, should do.

—Dagger, bow and quiver of arrows, walking staff, belt, pouches, and other miscellaneous accessories. (This is pretty standard stuff for adventurers, who would probably carry even more weapons.)

—First-aid kit, sunblock, insect repellent. (Isn't this what clerics are for?)

—Camera, alarm clock, flashlight. (Isn't this what wizards are for?)

—Lap dulcimer. (This is standard bard equipment, even if I didn't get a chance to play it. I had visions of sitting outside my tent in the evening, sending gentle music throughout the camp. Wisconsin's state bird, the mosquito, took care of that fantasy!)

—Tackle-box-sized cosmetic kit with shampoo, toothpaste, makeup, deodorant, etc. (A few *cantrips* and one good *change self* spell would be just as useful to adventurers.)

My two days of running around in the woods and fields were an eye-opening lesson in the necessary simplicity of the adventuring lifestyle (and the importance of good footgear). It also started me thinking about how little we humans actually need, given a little magical help, compared to how much we think we need. Some people say that role-playing games foster greed ("More treasure!"), but all that gold is heavy when you're far from home. In the end, I didn't use half of what I'd brought along, and the weather was so fine that I almost could have rolled up in my cloak and gone to sleep beneath a tree.

Yes, I think I'll take up the life of a wandering adventurer. Now where do I plug in my computer?

P.S. Thanks, Dave Bradshaw and all the Interphaze crew for a wonderful game.

Barbara G. Young

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He which has no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart. His passport shall be made
And crowns for convoy put into his purse.
We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.

Henry V, William Shakespeare

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PUBLISHER: James M. Ward
EDITOR: Barbara G. Young
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Roger E. Moore
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Dale A. Donovan
ART DIRECTOR: Larry W. Smith
CARTOGRAPHER: Diesel
TYPESETTING: TSR Graphic Art Services
SUBSCRIPTIONS: Janet L. Winters

BEYOND THE GLITTERING VEIL

BY STEVEN KURTZ

The greatest weapon against the darkness is your own mind.

Artwork by Terry Dykstra

Steve is a 23-year-old graduate student in his third year studying orthopaedic biomechanics at Cornell University. He dedicates this adventure to his wife, Karen, and the Visions *play-testing squad: Wolf, Tami, Pete, Ray, and Bill ("for sitting through yet another of my hair-brained scenarios").*

"Beyond the Glittering Veil" is an AD&D® adventure for 5-8 neutral or good characters of levels 3-6 (about 27 total levels). At least one member of the party should have a magical weapon of some kind; preferably, most or all should. A cleric or two will be extremely helpful but not necessary. Alternatively, the module can serve as a solo adventure for one 9th-12th level character with a magical weapon.

This adventure has been designed as an introduction for players and DMs alike to the AD&D 2nd Edition psionics rules, now available in *The Complete Psionics Handbook* (the *CPH),* which is required as a reference. Pay particular attention to the sections on psionic combat (chapter 2) and power descriptions (page 28). The DM is strongly advised to read through this adventure several times if he is not familiar with psionics, particularly noting the section "Psionics and the Travel Stone."

Two monsters herein come from *Monster Manual II,* one from the FIEND FOLIO® tome, and one from the *CPH;* additionally, two "normal" monsters from the *Monstrous Compendium* were updated according to the *CPH.* The large number of shadows (from the *MC)* should also be noted. Particular care should be used with all encounters in this module, as the monsters and NPCs are generally complex and tricky to run, but could prove devastating if used well. Two monster descriptions also give references to issues of DUNGEON® Adventures and DRAGON® Magazine which contain more information on moderating those creatures, though these issues are not required for playing this adventure. Some weapons are mentioned that are further detailed in either *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* or *Oriental Adventures,* though sufficient details are given here for game play.

Finally, the wizard Nightshade who appears in this adventure is *not* the same one that appeared in the adventure "Nightshade," in DUNGEON issue #7. The two wizards are completely unrelated.

Adventure Background

The adventure begins when, during their travels, the PCs stop for the night at the small village of Silver Rise. As soon as the party settles into the Sign of the Shady Vale, the only tavern in town, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> While you are eating your evening meal in the common room, you notice a decidedly somber air about the place. Frankly, the inn gives you the creeps. The innkeeper has the eerie ability to anticipate your every desire. As soon as you finish your cup of ale and wish for more, there he is with another full mug. You are about to remark on this when you hear a woman's scream in the darkness outside.

In the town square, a human woman has been attacked by a pack of four shadows and is quickly slain by the undead monsters. She rises as a shadow and moves with the pack (now five shadows) to attack any player characters who go outside. The pack is in a feeding frenzy and will fight the PCs to the death. The DM should bring out the horrific and frightening nature of this attack, pointing out the extreme difficulty in seeing the opponents and the awful chill of their touch. The more terror that can be generated, the better.

Shadows (5): hp 16, 14, 12 (×2), 11; see "Random Monster Encounters in Topaline" sidebar for complete statistics.

If turned, the shadows all flee the center of town and begin feasting on farmers living on the outskirts of the village. Once the pack has reached 10 shadows (in 1-3 hours), it returns again to attack the PCs. Each subsequent time the shadow pack is turned, the monsters return 1-3 hours later with 3-6 more shadows added to their number, until either they or the PCs are destroyed.

Once the PCs eliminate the threat of the shadows, they are approached by the shaken innkeeper, who tells the following tale while a few frightened townspeople listen in:

> "Last night, our town wizard, Lenchros, tried an experiment with the Travel Stone outside of town. His apprentice ran back here—the Travel Stone's only a mile away, right beside the north road—screaming that Lenchros had disappeared through some shimmering screen or wall. The boy babbled about a black ghost that had stepped out from the wall and was chasing him. He was hysterical, and his ravings made no sense at the time. We thought he was crazy and told him to go home to bed. We just thought he'd been spending too much time near the brewing pot. But then he disappeared, too. One of these shadow creatures must have gotten him. We hoped that things would settle down again, but after tonight—Thank the gods that you were here to stop them."
>
> As soon as the innkeeper's story trails off, an old lady shambles forward, leaning on a gnarled oak cane. She looks at each of you with her one good eye, making you feel as though she were peering into the very depths of your souls. Then she nods, almost more to herself than to anyone else.
>
> "Do not rejoice too soon. There will be more shadows coming by the Travel Stone," she says. "Unless you stop them."

The lady is Dame Alicia Moore, the mayor of Silver Rise and a psionic soothsayer with the wild power of precognition. In her dreams, she foresaw the wizard's tampering with the Travel Stone and the subsequent arrival of "dark death," which she feared would ultimately destroy her village unless the dimensional *gate* at the Stone was closed. A long-time confidant of the old wizard, she argued bitterly with Lenchros before he went to the Travel Stone, warning him about the dire consequences of his actions. The stubborn mage arrogantly dismissed her ravings and put her to sleep with a spell. By the time she awoke, it was too late.

Dame Moore saw each of the PCs in her dreams tonight before the noise of the fighting awakened her. She speaks to the PCs by name, imploring them to help her investigate what has happened at the Travel Stone and see if anything can be done to stop the imminent arrival of more shadows. Also, curious about the fate of Lenchros and the source of the shadows, she offers to accompany the party to the Stone with a small detachment of men-at-arms, villagers who kept their armor and weapons after serving in a local war some years ago. She urges the PCs to leave for the Travel Stone immediately; the outpouring of shadows might doom the village even before sunrise.

Innkeeper Ardy: AL LG; AC 6; MV 12; F3/WT; hp 24; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; S 11, D 16, C 15, I 13, W 14, Ch 14. Psionics: PSPs 32; contact (PS 14), ESP (PS 10), mindlink (PS 9), send thoughts (PS 12); leather armor, club.

Dame Moore, mayor of Silver Rise: AL NG; AC 10; MV 6; C3/WT; hp 17; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; ML 13; S 5, D 8, C 12, I 14, W 18, Ch 16; walking cane (damage 1-4). Spells: *bless, cure light wounds* (×2), *protection from evil, aid, chant, spiritual hammer.* Psionics: PSPs 32; precognition (PS 13).

Men-at-arms (13): AL good and neutral; AC 7; MV 12; 0-level humans; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; leather armor, shield, short sword, sling, 10 stones.

Though Ardy and Dame Moore are wild talents, they avoid revealing this to the PCs for as long as possible, until the secret writing in Lenchros's diary is revealed in the following section.

Lenchros's Diary

If the PCs even think about investigating Lenchros's home or otherwise searching for more information or clues, the innkeeper looks intently at Dame Moore for a moment, and the aged mayor pulls a old book from the shoulder bag at her side. Dame Moore announces that she has already searched the mage's home quite thoroughly. Her dreams led her to consider Lenchros's diary as the only relevant lead, and it is a baffling one at that. Only the first two-thirds of the book have been filled with entries. Each daily entry (they cover the last three years), including the last entry, is an extremely boring account of the day's activities and useless trivial details, with no reference anywhere to the Travel Stone. But Dame Moore is convinced from her dreams that the diary has some connection to the Stone.

Dame Moore can also offer the PCs a piece of information that might prove relevant to the enigma of the diary, although she herself can't make any connection between the two whatsoever.

$12,446,771 of gold at 3066

On the night before this, Lenchros appeared to her in a strange dream in which he talked about the weather, gossiped about several widows in Silver Rise (especially one named Drucilla, who died recently), and mentioned that he wished Alicia would take care of his familiar while he was gone. This greatly perplexed Dame Moore when she woke up, since his cat familiar has been dead for over five years. However, he used to ask this very favor of her whenever he was about to set off on a hairbrained adventure, which always ended with him getting in over his head in trouble.

The last page of Lenchros's diary radiates a faint magical aura because it has been altered by a *secret page* spell to look like just another boring entry. The command phrase is "Drucilla," which must be repeated twice while the book is open to the last page in order for the illusion to be lifted. The spell was cast at the 6th level of experience. If an attempt to *dispel* it fails, the contents of the *secret page* are lost forever; however, DMs may wish to allow the *dispel magic* spell to work, as a major clue will otherwise be lost. (Drucilla was one of Lenchros's old flames, a young-at-heart widow with a fantastic recipe for apple cobbler.)

The *secret page* hides the following note, addressed to the Mayor of Silver Rise:

"Dearest Alicia, please do not be cross at me for putting you to sleep like that, but if you are reading this, then perhaps there might have been some truth to your dreams (for once!).

"I have spent years trying to decipher the eroded writing on the Travel Stone, and you know I have always yearned to discover its purpose. At long last I think I have found it. The writings speak of the Stone summoning a 'Glittering Veil,' which I believe is a gate of some kind to the city of the Stone's builders. I must go there to learn more about the Stone and these strange powers that Ardy, you, and I share. There must be a connection between the powers and the Stone, for we all feel them ebb whenever we travel more than a league away from Silver Rise. Perhaps there is a way to make our powers permanent, beyond the glittering veil!"

For the Dungeon Master

Centuries ago, a race of psionicists, known in legend as the Mystics, experimented with modes of teleportation and dimensional travel. They wanted to create a mode of travel usable by all Mystics, regardless of their psionic talents, and their first experimental teleportation devices were called Travel Stones.

The most powerful Mystics worked together to empower the Stones, but the Stones had limiting and catastrophic flaws. First of all, travel from Stone to Stone was made possible only by opening entry and exit *gates* on the quasi-elemental plane of Vacuum (otherwise known as the Void). Initially, both the entry and exit *gates* were practically superimposed, and one could travel between *gates* with little or no physical discomfort. However, over time, the entry and exit *gates* in the Void began to drift apart. As decades passed, those who used the Stones found themselves spending more and more time in the Void between *gates*. The power of the Stones is enough to partially shield

Travel Stone Wild Powers

Entries in this table have the following format, derived from *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, page 28:

1d100 roll *Name of power (CPH* page reference): PS = Power Score; SS = Starting Strength (in PSPs)*; IC = Initial Cost (in PSPs); MC = Maintenance Cost (in PSPs over time); R = Range; Prep = Preparation Time (in rounds); A/E = Area of Effect.

01-08 *All-Round Vision* (page 33): PS Wis −3; SS 22; IC 6; MC 4/round; R 0; Prep 0; A/E personal. The PC effectively sees in all directions at once; no one can sneak up on him without using magic or concealment. However, he takes a −4 penalty on gaze attacks.

09-12 *Clairaudience* (page 30): PS Wis −3; SS 22; IC 6; MC 4/round; R unlimited; Prep 0; A/E special. PC can hear sounds from distant location by mentally picking a spot from which he wishes to "hear," then covering his ears and concentrating. He can then hear anything he would normally hear if he were standing in that spot. The more distant the image, the harder it is to use this power; selecting listening spots up to 100 yards from the psionic character may be done normally, but selecting a listening spot farther away places a power-score modifier on the use of this power (up to 1,000 yards, −2; up to 10 miles, −4; up to 100 miles, −6). This form of scrying is nonmagical and cannot be detected or warded off by magical means.

13-16 *Clairvoyance* (page 30): PS Wis −4; SS 23; IC 7; MC 4/round; R unlimited; Prep 0; A/E special. PC can see a view of a distant location by mentally picking a spot from which he wishes to "see," then closing his eyes and concentrating. He can then see anything he would normally see if he were standing in that spot. The more distant the image, the harder it is to use this power; viewing spots up to 100 yards from the psionic character may be viewed normally, but selecting a viewing spot farther away places a power-score modifier on the use of this power (up to 1,000 yards, −2; up to 10 miles, −4; up to 100 miles, −6). This form of scrying is nonmagical and cannot be detected or warded off by magical means.

17-24 *Combat Mind* (page 33): PS Int −4; SS 21; IC 5; MC 4/round.; R 0; Prep 0; A/E personal. This power gives a −1 bonus to party initiative thanks to the user's understanding of his enemy's fighting tactics.

25-32 *Conceal Thoughts* (page 80): PS Wis; SS 17; IC 5; MC 3/round; R 0; Prep 0; A/E 3-yard radius. The PC is protected against all psionic powers and magical spells that detect or read thoughts, including ESP, probe, mindlink, and life detection.

33-40 *Danger Sense* (page 33): PS Wis −3; SS 13; IC 4; MC 3/turn; R special; Prep 0; A/E 10 yards. This power warns the PC when danger is imminent. Information about the type of danger involved is not gained, but the general direction of the danger is given.

41-48 *Know Direction* (page 34): PS Int; SS 1; IC 1; MC n/a; R 0; Prep 0; A/E personal. The PC knows in what direction north lies.

travelers from the intense cold (absolute zero temperature) and the absence of atmospheric pressure in the Void, but as the distance between the *gates* increased, even shielded travelers fell subject to dangerous side effects.

Finally, the use of these *gates* attracted the attention of some of the Void's inhabitants. The longer the *gates* were kept open, the more likely it became that a shadow or a group of shadows would step through the portals and enter the Prime Material plane. By the time the Mystics discovered the flaw in their creations and started dismantling the Stones, it was already too late. Many shadows were already on the rampage near the Mystics' cities and were multiplying too quickly in some areas to be controlled.

The Mystics were forced to abandon some of their settlements because of the shadows. Where the Mystics finally settled remains a mystery; none remain on the worlds where Stones still exist (the Mystics considered those worlds unsafe). In time, the Mystics and the use of the Stones were forgotten. Today in Silver Rise, what was once a Travel Stone is now remembered as *the* Travel Stone, a shrine of good luck for travelers on the north road leading out of the village.

49-56 *Lend Health* (page 62): PS Con −1; SS 4; IC 4; MC n/a; R touch; Prep 0; A/E individual. With a successful power check, the PC can transfer as many of his own hit points as he wants (until he has but 1 hp left) to the person touched, thus healing the recipient. This takes one round. The user cannot force himself to go below 1 hp, and the recipient cannot get more hit points than he normally has.

57-64 *Life Detection* (page 87): PS Int −2; SS 15; IC 3; MC 3/round; R 100 yards; Prep 0; A/E 40 yards. The PC can detect presence of all living, thinking creatures within range within a 180° arc. Two rounds of scanning accurately reveals all such beings, including unintelligent monsters.

65-68 *Object Reading* (page 31): PS Wis −5; SS 16; IC 16; MC n/a; R 0; Prep 1; A/E touch. PC can detect and interpret the psychic residue imprinted on an object by its most recent owner, gaining information on the owner's race, sex, age, alignment, and how the owner gained and lost the item.

69-76 *Poison Sense* (page 91): PS Wis; SS 1; IC 1; MC n/a; R 0; Prep 0; A/E 1-yard radius. The character can detect any poison and its exact location within the area of effect, but cannot identify the poison type. Any substance causing a saving throw vs. poison counts, even animal venom and poisonous gases and potions.

77-84 *Psychic Messenger* (page 90): PS Con −4; SS 16; IC 4; MC 3/round; R 200 miles; Prep 2; A/E 1 sq. yard. This power lets the character to create an insubstantial, three-dimensional image of himself which can appear anywhere within the range and deliver a message that everyone present can see and hear. Communication is one-way only; the PC cannot hear or see anything going on around the messenger's image.

85-88 *Sensitivity to Psychic Impressions* (page 32): PS Wis −4; SS 20; IC 12; MC 2/round; R 0; Prep 2; A/E 20-yard radius. PC can detect psychic residue imprinted on a place by events that involved strong emotions or psychic energy. Divide the power-check roll by two and round up to get the number of strong events that can be sensed in one place.

89-96 *Spirit Sense* (page 37): PS Wis −3; SS 10; IC 10; MC n/a; R 0; Prep 0; A/E 15-yard radius. The PC can sense the presence of ghosts, banshees, wraiths, haunts, and other noncorporeal undead that bear the remnants of their former personalities. This awareness extends out to 15 yards, but the user cannot tell exactly where the undead are. Spirit sense will not detect zombies, skeletons, shadows, or similar undead. (Lenient DMs may allow the detection of other noncorporeal undead, such as shadows, but should strictly define which undead fall into this category.)

97-00 Choose one of the above powers.

* Details for determining starting strengths for wild powers are given in the *CPH,* page 20. Wild talents gain 4 PSPs for every level of experience they gain *after* they gain psionic powers, not for levels they possessed before such powers were gained.

Psionics and the Travel Stone

If the sole power of the Stones was simply to open *gates,* then their history would have ended long ago once their use was forgotten. However, the Stones also have the ability to temporarily endow psionic powers on strong-willed human and demihuman minds. Characters and NPCs of 1st or higher level will be endowed with wild-talent psionic power after spending one month within two miles of the Stone, or immediately after passing through its *gate.* This is what happened to Lenchros, Ardy, and Dame Moore, who have kept their talents a closely guarded secret for many years. Born and raised in Silver Rise, the three went their separate ways but returned to their home town—and soon developed psionic powers.

As noted in the *CPH,* psionics refers to the abilities that result from the channeling of mental power. There are two types of individuals who can use psionics: psionicists and wild talents. Psionicists are those people who have been trained in their powers. They form a new, independent character class, fully detailed in the *CPH.* The Mystics who created the Stones, for example, were psionicists. Wild talents are those who are devoted to another character class, like a fighter or rogue, but who have limited psionic powers. Under the AD&D 2nd Edition psionics rules, wild talents usually have only one minor power, as opposed to psionicists, who gain many powers as they gain levels. The notation "WT" with an NPC description indicates that the character is a wild talent (see the *CPH,* pages 19-21); the notation "Psi" followed by a number indicates that the NPC is a psionicist of the given level.

The Travel Stone turns the PCs into wild talents for the duration of the adventure. To determine which power each PC receives, the DM rolls 1d100 and consults the "Travel Stone Wild Powers" sidebar. This is not, however, an exhaustive list (over 150 psionic powers, including those that appear in the table, are explained in the *CPH).* Many powers were excluded for the sake of simplicity in play; in particular,

powers with prerequisites were excluded. If the DM has a copy of the *CPH,* he may use Tables 12 and 13, on pages 20-21, to determine the powers gained.

Psionic powers are treated just like nonweapon proficiencies under the AD&D 2nd Edition rules. The character has a power score (PS) for each power. This power score is related to the character's intelligence, wisdom, or constitution. Once per round, according to initiative, a character has the option to exercise his psionic power, just as he has the option to cast a spell or use a weapon. The player rolls 1d20 to see if his character's attempt to use his psionic power succeeds. If the power-check roll is equal to or is lower than the PC's power score, he succeeds, providing the character has enough psionic strength points.

Psionic strength points (PSPs) measure a character's ability to use his psionic powers. The use of certain psionic powers requires an initial cost in PSPs when the power is activated; if the power check fails, half this many points (round up) are used in the attempt. Some psionic powers also have maintenance costs in PSPs, which show how many PSPs must be used each round to keep the power working (maintaining a power does not require a new power check). Some powers must be prepared for by spending a number of rounds in mediation; after that, the power check is made and PSPs are expended. A prepared power can be "held" without use for just one round; if not used after that, the preparation time is wasted and must be done again (and no PSPs are used).

To determine the psionic strength of each character for the course of this adventure, refer to the SS (starting strength) entry for each power in the sidebar. For instance, if Joe is a 4th-level fighter/wild talent endowed with clairvoyance, he starts with 23 PSPs: 7 [initial cost] + (4 [uses] × 4 [maintenance cost]). Once you have determined each eligible character's psionic strength and powers, keep them secret. It will improve the game if the PCs gradually discover their powers over the course of the adventure. Of course, if a PC with danger sense hasn't caught on that the tingling on the back of his neck tends to occur whenever he unwittingly approaches a dangerous situation, the DM should feel free to drop a few hints.

Introducing these psionic powers can be easily done by the DM. At the onset of a combat round or at an encounter area where a character's psionic powers might reveal some information, secretly roll a power check. If it succeeds, the stress of the encounter or the psychic impressions left there trigger the PC's psionic power for the first time. The adventurer might find himself sensing approaching danger (danger sense) or identifying an item's previous owner (object reading). The DM should keep track of the characters' PSPs for most of the adventure, to keep the limits of their powers a mystery for as long as possible. This will greatly improve the enjoyment of the game for the players and be much more realistic as well, although it does mean more bookkeeping for the DM. For example, once a player knows that his character can intuitively understand what his enemies are about to do for five rounds (using the combat mind power) before getting mentally tired, the DM can let him know how the system works and the fact that he has 21 PSPs, but until then the mystery should be maintained.

Recovery of PSPs is made by not expending any more PSPs while taking it easy. Any activity reduces the number of PSPs recovered, and every hour of recovery is rated according to the most strenuous activity undertaken during that time. The following shows how many PSPs can be gained by the PCs:

Hard exertion: No PSPs recovered. This category includes all fighting, running, digging, climbing, dungeon exploring, swimming, and the like.

Medium exertion: 3 PSPs per hour. This category includes walking and riding under calm conditions.

Light exertion: 6 PSPs per hour. This category includes sitting, resting, and reading under calm conditions.

No exertion: 12 PSPs per hour. This category includes sleeping.

For more exhaustive descriptions of psionicists, psionic powers, defenses, and attacks, see the *CPH.*

The Travel Stone

One mile along the north road leading out of Silver Rise, the Travel Stone stands in the middle of a dark field. The Stone is a local shrine, and Dame Moore tells the PCs that traveling peddlers have been leaving offerings of flowers and coppers at the Stone's base for centuries, hoping for good luck and safe travel on the road ahead. Now, a shimmering plane of energy 4′ wide, 7′ high, and a hair's breadth thick stands in the field before the Stone. The *gate* is an opaque topaz color, and every few seconds a splash of silver light dances across its surface, illuminating the night.

The Stone itself is a nondescript pillar of limestone, 3′ in diameter and 9′ high. It is shining with a bright silver-white glow and strongly radiates alteration magic, but casting any spells other than *detect magic* or expending psionic energy on the Stone will have no effect other than causing the size of the existing *gate* to grow.

In spite of the pillar's bright glow, the PCs can see large, unreadable runes inscribed on its surface (written in the Mystic tongue, a language unknown the PCs). A wizard can magically decipher the runes using a *comprehend languages* spell. The translated runes read: "Ye who pass before, travel well." Dame Moore has been told the meaning of the runes by Lenchros and will translate them for the PCs if they express interest. Of course, before Lenchros's experiment, everyone assumed that the inscription referred to the North road, not the *gate* that currently stands nearby. The inscriptions that Lenchros deciphered to open the *gate* are much too small and faint to be perceived through the Stone's bright glare.

The Stone is old and long past its years of faithful service. The *gate,* which could be opened with an expenditure of 10 PSPs, can no longer be closed except by touching it with a permanent magical item related to *gates* or *teleportation* (an *amulet of the planes* or a *helm of teleportation,* for example). Unfortunately, there is no way the PCs can get the information they need to close the *gate* without actually stepping through the portal. Even powerful divination spells like *legend lore* only cryptically suggest that the solution to the dilemma lies "beyond the glittering veil."

While the PCs are pondering the *gate,* read the following to the players:

> While you are deciding upon the next course of action, Dame Moore utters a cry of alarm and points to the shimmering plane of light. The opalescent surface shimmers darkly and disgorges a black, shadowy figure. It glides toward you, a ragged swath of darkness in the bright chromatic glow of the Stone.

The **shadow** (hp 20; see "Random Monster Encounters in Topaline" sidebar for complete statistics) will fight until destroyed.

After the combat, Dame Moore implores the PCs to step into the *gate* and destroy the source of the shadows. She agrees to wait here with the 13 men-at-arms (the town guard) and attempt to prevent any shadows that emerge from the *gate* in the party's absence from destroying Silver Rise. Under no circumstances will she or any of the guardsmen accompany the party; they are sworn to remain and protect the town. Note that Dame Moore is unaware that without magical weapons, neither she nor the guards can harm the shadows. Any PC who realizes this and offers them magical weapons should gain a 1,000 XP bonus for the act.

Once the PCs step through the *gate,* read the following to the players:

> The shimmering topaz veil passes over and through you like a cold, damp sheet left outside in winter. Immediately, you are engulfed in numbing, freezing darkness, a kind of emptiness that makes your eyes scream for sight and your ears plead for sound. Somewhere far away you can make out a rectangle of light in the vast cathedral of nothingness, and you begin to stumble toward it. Your chest heaves but draws no breath, your body stings from icy needles of numbing cold, but your legs carry you forward nevertheless. After what seems like an eternity, you push against the rectangle of light before you and emerge . . . somewhere.

The Travel Stone has the ability to partially shield the PCs from the worst of the Void's effects, but the adventurers must make system-shock checks to see if they survive the journey through the Void without negative side effects. Those who fail their shock rolls take 3-12 hp cold and decompression damage and must make a wisdom check or go temporarily insane (1-6 hours) from sensory deprivation. Even those who make their system-shock rolls are disoriented for one round by the abrupt return of their senses and their sudden arrival.

Use the Topaline map for the keyed encounters that follow. The DM is encouraged to add additional encounters or to beef up existing ones if he feels the party is too strong for the adventure as it stands.

Beyond the Veil

A. Arrival. After the PCs have traveled through the *gate* and suffered its side effects, they arrive on Topaline, a colony world long abandoned by its original settlers, the Mystics. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> When your vision returns, you see that you have stepped through the *gate* into a cool, dark land. You are on a large ledge or terrace on a hillside overlooking a huge pyramidal structure. Three moons ride in the clear starry sky. Beyond the pyramid, to the south, east, and west lies a wasteland devoid of any vegetation. You can't see what lies to the north beyond the hill on which you are standing. The temperature is about 50°F, and there is no wind.
>
> The lozenge-shaped pyramid, which you guess to have a hexagonal base, is fashioned of countless panels that appear semitransparent in the pale moonlight. A path zig-zags its way from the terrace, down the hill to the base of the pyramid, where there appears to be an entrance of some kind.
>
> The terrace itself is 20′ wide and 80′ long, with a glowing Travel Stone standing flush against the hill. It resembles the Travel Stone in Silver Rise in all respects and projects a shimmering wall before it, the *gate* that you have just exited.

Background details on the world to which the PCs have arrived are given in area C. Try to play up the spookiness of the terrace upon the PCs' arrival. If one of the PCs is sensitive to psychic impressions, he is almost overwhelmed by a wave of terror, the psychic residue of the Mystics who were massacred here while they waited to pass through the *gate* to safety. Such psychic impressions can also occur elsewhere in the city, whenever the DM wishes to inject a sense of awe and fear into the game.

If there is a ranger or tracker in the party, there is a 10% chance per level that he notices tracks leading from the *gate* directly over the edge of the terrace. The tracks belong to the wizard Lenchros, who passed through the *gate* alone two days ago. The feeble wizard was driven insane by his passage through the Void and ran off the edge of the terrace, thinking he could fly (he could, but he neglected to cast the spell first). He was not entirely dead after he hit a landing 30′ below, but a predator waiting there quickly finished off the wounded and demented mage.

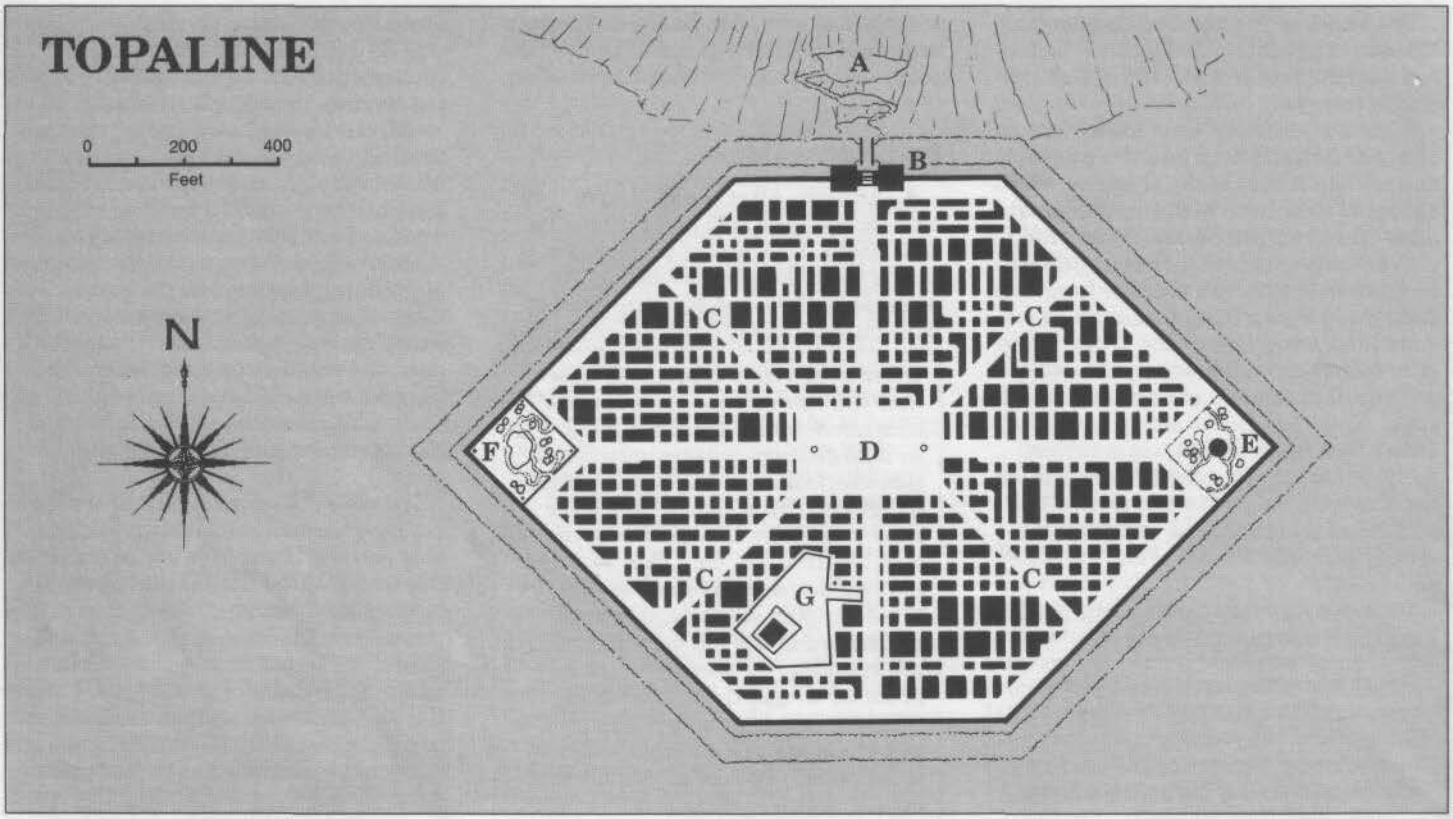
Having thus eaten well, the rather ambitious gray ooze has decided to make that landing its home. Since the wasteland is cloaked in perpetual darkness, the ooze has no problem wandering about aboveground, although it finds a ledge overhanging the landing to be a comfortable place to wait for prey.

The ooze's close proximity to the Travel Stone has endowed it with some psionic powers. If any PCs use psionics on the terrace or while walking down the steps to the landing, there is a good chance that the ooze will sense it and gain a +2 bonus on surprise. While hanging partially over a ledge 10′ above the terrace, the ooze singles out the psionics user using its psionic sense and delivers psychic crushes until it runs out of strength points or the PCs figure out a way to attack it (by firing missile weapons in the direction of the ledge, for instance). If the PCs attack, the ooze figures that it has to earn its meal the hard way and drops onto a PC from above.

Gray ooze: INT animal; AL N; AC 8; MV 1; HD 3+3; hp 22; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; SA psionics, corrodes metal; SD immune to all spells except lightning, immune to fire and cold; SZ M; ML special; XP 650; MC and CPH. Psionics: PS 13; PSPs 92; powers: psionic sense (60′, no cost), mind blank, psychic crush.

The ooze looks very much like the rock ledge to which it is attached. As a result, identifying the source of the psionic attacks will prove challenging, since a defender cannot tell from what direction he is being attacked.

If the PCs take some time to search the landing after they have dispatched the ooze, they discover a metal *wand of illumination* with eight charges remaining. The four command words for the wand ("burble," "glow," "shine," and "nova") are written on the wand but require a *read magic* spell to decipher. This is all that remains of the wizard Lenchros of Silver Rise, who was completely dissolved by the ooze (it found



the wand much more difficult to digest). The fate of Lenchros can be confirmed by performing a successful object reading on the wand.

B. Gates of the Mystic City. Once the PCs have reached the bottom of the path leading down from the terrace, read the following to the players:

> The pyramid is huge, about a third of a mile at its widest and a tenth of a mile high. The transparency of the structure is much more evident now, since you can see one of the moons shining through it. A trench, nearly 50′ wide, surrounds the pyramid, spanned by a bridge before you.
>
> The bridge arches over the seemingly bottomless trench to a solid stone two-story gatehouse at the pyramid's base. A big sign covered with large, sloppy letters hangs on the doors of the gatehouse. You recognize one of the runes you saw on the Travel Stone, but the rest of the writing is unintelligible.

If a wizard casts a *comprehend languages* spell, he can read the sign, which is written in a corrupt form of the Mystic language. "Travelers to Topaline, prepare a toll or turn away. If you have no gold, bother me not! Twenty-five pieces each thrown into the trench. That is my price." If the PCs follow the sign's instructions, they must wait five minutes before the gates are opened by a squat gray creature (a boggle named Erasmus; see area B7 for statistics) and the PCs are ushered through the gatehouse into the city.

Should the PCs not follow the sign's instructions, either by choice ("Let's see what happens if we dump 25 silver pieces over the side of the bridge!") or by necessity (no one in the party can decipher the sign or they are poor), they incur the wrath of the crypt thing Gantus (area B3) and his boggle servants.

B1. Killing Zone. This foyer between the inner and outer gates is pierced with arrow loops on the walls and murder holes on the roof. Both gates are double barred from the inside, but each can be opened by a *knock* spell (a thief attempting to pick locks will not meet with success, since there is no lock to pick on either of the gates). Banging on the gates or shouting attracts the attention of Gantus, a crypt thing (see area B3), who arrives in 1-4 rounds.

B2. Guard Rooms. These rooms now stand empty except for some rubbish scattered about. The stairs leading up have been chiseled away to form ramps, and the floor is heavily lined with scratch marks leading from the doors to the ramps. The exterior doors have been barred from the inside.

B3. Former Barracks. This area appears to be a sculptor's studio, with marble chips and white dust scattered everywhere. A tracker will notice two sets of footprints in the marble dust, both of them recent. One set belongs to a human-sized person wearing sandals. The other set belongs to a flat-footed humanoid (these footprints can be recognized as boggle tracks if the tracker has ever encountered them before).

A glance around the room reveals a table covered with plaster study models of faces, sketchbooks on a shelf, small full-figure study models, hammers, chisels, hunks of marble, and 10 large marble sculptures of exceptional beauty.

Although the sculptures have been beautifully fashioned by the hand of a skilled artist, the theme of the sculptures is somber, tragic, and profoundly disturbing: a strong woman, naked, on her hands and knees, weeping by a tree stump carved with skulls; a frail old man, hairless, with worms growing out of his wrinkled skin. Each of the sculptures is shocking, the creation of a skilled genius with a twisted mind.

Because of their perfection, however, each of the sculptures would bring 100-1,000 gp from an art collector (with a sense of the perverse) in a large city, if the PCs can figure out a way to move the heavy art objects across the Void. This large chamber is the art studio of Gantus, a crypt thing. He is currently doodling in a sketchbook, working on the detail of a fly sitting on a skull.

Gantus, crypt thing: INT very; AL NE; AC 3; MV 12; HD 6; hp 37; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA *teleport;* SD hit only by +1 or better weapons; SZ M; ML 17; XP 650; MC (GREYHAWK® appendix). In his robe pockets, Gantus carries the keys to the chests in area B4 and the cells in area B7.

Gantus was created by the Mystics and placed in the gatehouse to eternally guard it until their eventual return. They succeeded in their creation all too well, for their crypt thing approached the intelligence and artistic talent of its creators. Gantus was granted the exceptional ability to *teleport* whole groups of people (not just individuals, like usual crypt things) and also to specify their destination. Unlike others of its kind, he was created with enough free will to become corrupt and cruel as the centuries passed, taking tolls from the visitors he was supposed to keep out and imprisoning others to satisfy his passion for sculpture.

As soon as he notices party members loitering outside the gatehouse or snooping about his studio, he attempts to *teleport* them all into a prison cell. The member of the party with the worst saving throw score vs. spells must make a saving throw. If that character fails to save, the entire party is *teleported* to a cell in area B7.

If the PCs search the studio and make their save, they discover Gantus in a shadowy corner of the chamber, doodling away in a sketchbook and ignoring them. If threatened, he attacks, but should he be wounded to 25 hp or less, he will shout through an arrow loop to his boggle servants for help (they arrive in 1-2 rounds; see area B9). Gantus attempts to subdue the PCs and imprison them in area B7 so that he can use them as models for future sculptures. If the party attempts to talk with Gantus, they discover he speaks only the language of the Mystics.

If the PCs can find a way to communicate (e.g., *tongues* spells), Gantus becomes rude and insist that he be left alone. Should the PCs continue to bother him, he calls for the boggles and tries to evict the intruders from the gatehouse.

B4. Lair of Gantus. Here the crypt thing stores all of his treasure and his share of the toll money. The three chests in the attic are locked (Gantus has the keys) but none are trapped. One chest has 675 gp, another holds 325 sp and 450 ep. The third chest holds a potion of *ESP* and a scroll with one *magic missile* spell, cast at the 9th level.

B5. Art Supplies. Gantus uses this attic to store all of his old sketchbooks and study models. There are also five blank sketchbooks in a chest near the trapdoor, recently obtained from the wizard Nightshade, who lives in area G. Two of these sketchbooks are of sufficient quality that they can be used as traveling spell books.

B6. Studio. This chamber is currently used as Gantus's modeling studio (it was once a guard room). A wooden circular platform rests in the center of the room, upon which a model can be placed and rotated, to be viewed from any angle. The room has several small crates filled with clay for making study models, and there is an assortment of various props (skulls, helmets, shields, etc.) scattered about. These are the belongings of captured adventurers and items scrounged from the bottom of the trench and the city by the boggles.

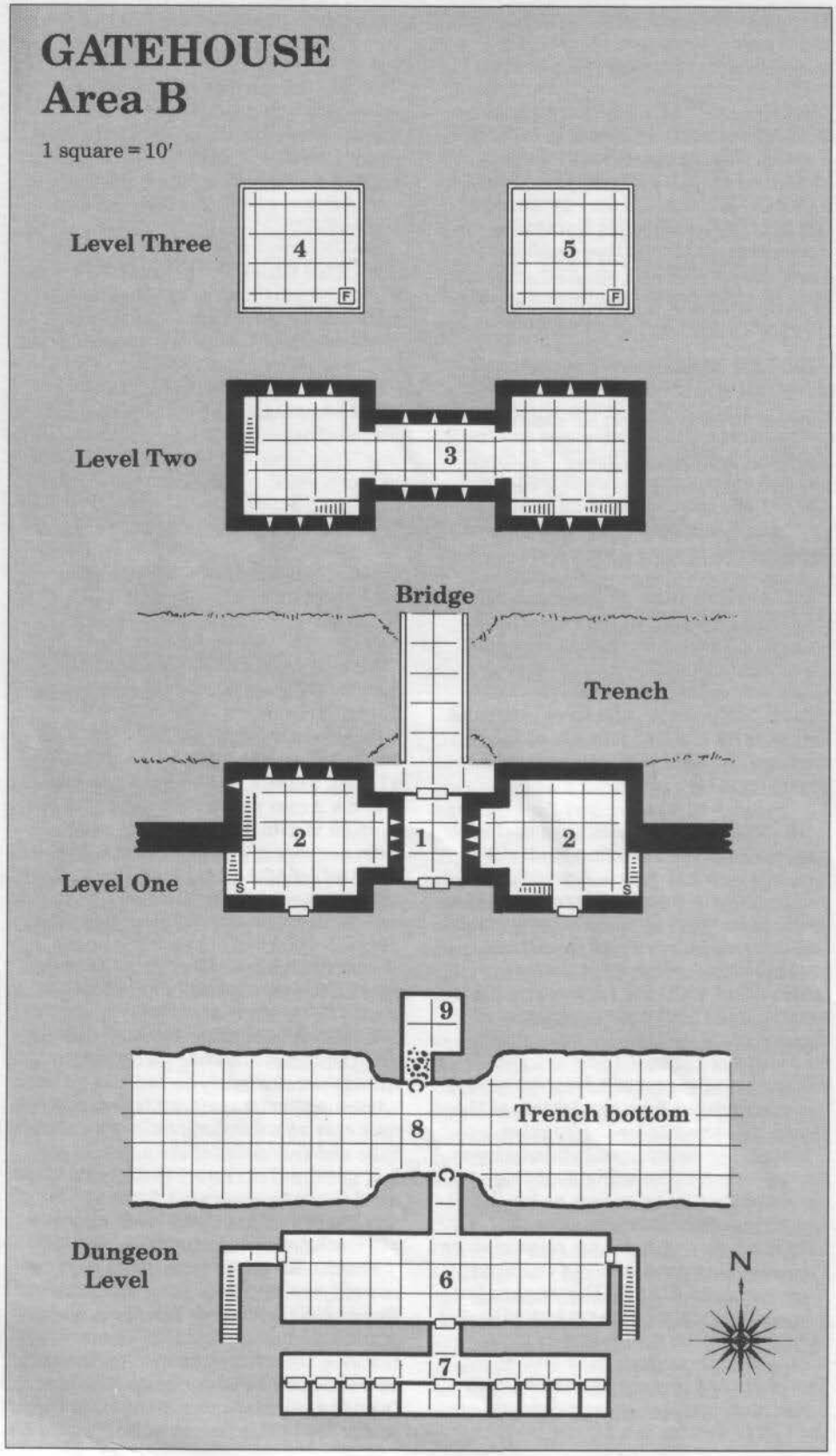
Most of the equipment is falling apart, except for a long sword in a rotting scabbard that looks as new as the day it was forged, over four centuries ago. This is a *sword +2, +3 vs. psionicists or psionics-using creatures, +4 vs. mind flayers,* named Render. The weapon has a lawful-neutral alignment but will allow itself to be wielded by anyone with a lawful component to alignment. The blade can protect its wielder with a tower of iron will (a psionic defense; see the *CPH).* Render is a Mystic weapon, empowered by them over 300 years ago. It has intelligence, ego, and psionic power scores of 15, and it has 30 PSPs. The weapon can communicate telepathically with only its wielder; it cannot speak. Render much prefers to be wielded by a psionicist, like the Mystics who created it, but will accept a wild-talent warrior or rogue if no psionicist is available.

B7. Cell Block. If the weakest member of the party failed his save vs. Gantus's *teleportation* (see area B3), the entire party will have been transported to the largest cell in the block. Plated with steel treated by the Mystics to blunt even magical weapons, each of the doors is massive and kept in good condition. As a result, it is unlikely that the PCs can get their cell door open unless they have a *knock* spell handy. The lock is on the outside of the door and cannot be picked from within. There is a small circular window in the door, covered with thick steel grating, and a small hatch through which food can be delivered.

All of the cells have been stripped bare by Gantus's chief helper, a boggle named Erasmus.

Erasmus, boggle: INT low; AL CN; AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+3; hp 27; THAC0 17; #AT 2 claws and 1 bite; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-4; SA 2 rear claws for 1-4/1-4 if they drop on victim from a height, steal one item per round if able to hit AC 5 (needs 1d20 roll of 12+); SD elastic body, weapons cause −1 hp per HD damage, fire resistant, secretes nonflammable slippery oil, *spider climb* and *dimension door* (through frames at 30-yard range) at will, detect *invisible* creatures by smell; SZ S; ML 9; XP 1,400; MM2/20. See DUNGEON issue #19, page 36, for additional notes on boggle capabilities (this is not necessary in order to run the adventure, however). In his pouch, Erasmus carries a foot-long hollow wooden tube and five doses of moonflower pollen, gathered in the wizard Nightshade's garden (see area G3) and wrapped in folded packets of long, supple moonflower leaves.

Erasmus is crafty but somewhat of a coward, making full use of his frame-to-frame *dimension door* talents to escape pursuit and cause trouble. His cherubic features belie his mercurial personality, however, and he continually wanders from the cell block to the trench bottom under the bridge (see area B8), where he



spends most of his time hanging upside down.

Once visitors are *teleported* into one of the cells, Erasmus uses his blowgun to introduce moonflower pollen into the room through the food hatch. Everyone in the party must save vs. poison or pass out for 1-4 turns. Erasmus listens at the door for any sounds of movement. If he hears anything but the sounds of relaxed breathing (boggles have extremely acute hearing), he blows in another dose and everyone in the party must make another saving throw (at −1 this time) or lose consciousness for 1-4 more turns. The boggle continues with this strategy (the PCs get a cumulative −1 penalty to resist the pollen) until either everyone in the party is or pretends to be asleep, or he has introduced all five doses of his pollen into the cell. Then, Erasmus opens the door and attempts to physically subdue any PCs who resisted the pollen.

Should the PCs feign sleep, wait for the door to open, and then attack, Erasmus fights for 1-3 rounds before attempting to flee to area B9 and hide in the lair with his family. If cornered or captured (a difficult task for a monster with *spider climb* and *dimension door* abilities), he pleads for his life in a crude form of Common, pledging to serve his new masters with all of his strength and will. He knows little about the Mystic city, stating that it is a dark place and full of dead things. Erasmus is full of respect for Gantus, whom he regards with a mixture or fear and awe. He will never fight his former master.

If the PCs are incapacitated, they are stripped of their gear (which is piled in area B6). The adventurers are then separated into individual cells. After starving the PCs for two or three days, Gantus orders Erasmus to feed them mushrooms gathered from the bottom of the trench (area B8). PCs eating the mushrooms must save vs. poison at −4 or become subject to *suggestion.* Those who refuse to eat lose 1-3 points of strength, dexterity, and constitution per day. Once their constitution reaches zero, they die.

Those who do eat the mushrooms and fail their saves are expected to follow Gantus's modelling instructions. They are led into area B6, starved or fed (depending on Gantus's whim and whether he thinks a gaunt model is called for), and sculpted. Once Gantus has the sketches and study models com-

pleted, he sends the boggles into the city (to area F) to scrounge stone from the ruins. When they return with the proper piece of marble, the chiselling begins. After Gantus is finished, he hands the PCs over to Nightshade at area G, who will turn them into skeleton bodyguards.

If the party ends up in the cell, it could mean the end of the adventure for the PCs. The DM shouldn't turn the gatehouse into a death trap, however. If the entire party is incapacitated by the pollen, for instance, one of them could wake up while Erasmus is moving another PC into the adjoining cell. Better yet, the DM can announce that a PC wakes up while he is being dragged by his feet into a new cell.

At low levels, it is pretty easy for characters to get wiped out through no fault of their own by poor die rolls. Should this happen to the party, try to give individual party members chances to escape and free their compatriots.

B8. Trench Bottom. The bottom of the trench is cold, wet, and perpetually dark—the perfect place to grow mushrooms. The few mushrooms that are edible support a family of boggles that have been serving Gantus since they wandered here from the wilderness surrounding the city decades ago. Once *teleported* into the cell block, they feared they had been caught by a lich and pleaded so pitifully that Gantus agreed to let them serve him (he would have simply *teleported* them away, but good help is so hard to find).

There is a boggle on guard underneath the bridge at all times (80% likely to be Erasmus; otherwise, see B9 and select one randomly). If the PCs drop their toll into the trench, it is retrieved and counted by the boggle. If everything is in order, the boggle runs inside and up the stairs to unlock the doors for the PCs, then quickly bars the door behind them. The boggles get a share of the toll money; this is a big reason why they continue to serve Gantus, who cares much more about sculpture than gold.

Erasmus is a mischievous fellow who likes to spend much of his time upside down underneath the bridge. If any PCs attempt to climb down into the trench, he smears his naturally secreted oil along the trench wall, hoping that the PCs will slip and fall. Once a PC slips, Erasmus tries to steal an item (a dropped sword or staff, perhaps), then uses his *dimension door* ability to return to his lair (area B9). He deposits his loot and gathers his family to torment the PCs and drive them away.

B9. Boggle Lair. If the party searches the bottom of the trench, there is a 1-in-6 chance per searching character that they discover a secret door in the north trench wall. The secret door once slid easily to the right, but it has been sabotaged by the family of boggles who use the door as the first barrier to entering their lair. The secret door now requires a successful open-doors roll to budge. The narrow corridor behind the secret door has been filled with rubble and is impassible by all but magical means unless the rubble is cleared (this takes 20 man-hours of work).

A family of boggles has collapsed the entrance to what used to be an oubliette and currently use it as their lair. They will certainly take offense at any who PCs try to invade their home by clearing away the rubble. In addition to Erasmus, the boggles are **Hoopla** (hp 22), **Gulliver** (hp 21), and **Jilby** (hp 17). Their statistics are identical to Erasmus's (see area B7). The boggles use their *dimension door* ability to come out to attack any digging invaders, retreating one by one as they are wounded to less than half their hit points. They then wait in their lair for a final stand against the PCs. Details on boggle capabilities in DUNGEON issue #19, page 36, will add more spice to this encounter.

The boggles have a silver pendant with a *continual light* spell cast upon it hanging in the center of their lair. This item is a token from the wizard Nightshade (area G) and is enough to keep the shadows in areas C of the city at bay when they go hunting for more marble for their master.

The clan treasure consists of 525 gp and a beautiful marble sculpture of Calumbo, the grandfather of all the boggles in the clan and the first boggle to serve Gantus. The crypt thing sculpted his faithful servant and presented the work to the boggle family after Calumbo's death, as a symbol of the pact between them. The clan, who revere the icon as their immortalized grandfather, agreed to continue the pact and to serve Gantus faithfully. They will defend the sculpture (worth 1,000 gp) to the death.

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C. City of the Dead. Once the PCs have passed through the gatehouse, read the following to the players:

> Beyond the gatehouse, you notice to your surprise that the pyramid is completely hollow and transparent! You can barely make out a black grid lattice, holding 10′ by 10′ plates of transparent glass, soaring high above against a moonlit sky studded with bright stars.
>
> Before you, a silent city bathed in cold moonlight fills the hollow pyramid. Wide boulevards lead straight ahead and to your left and right. All of the two-story stone houses lining the boulevards are pitch black and empty. The city appears completely deserted.

When the Mystics started experimenting with Travel Stones, they discovered this sunless world of eternal night, surrounded by five faintly luminous moons (which might fool the PCs into expecting an eventual sunrise). They also discovered a valuable natural resource: topaline. The Mystics had the habit of naming their colonies after their chief exports, and so it was that this city was named Topaline. The mineral topaline could easily be melted and formed into sheets. When cooled by a special process, these sheets were semi-opaque when viewed from one side and completely transparent when viewed from the other. Channeling psychic energy to the mineral caused it to glow and warm up in direct proportion to the amount of energy expended. The windows in many Mystic houses were made from topaline, and the huge hollow pyramid was built out of topaline plates mounted on a vast steel network.

The function of the pyramid was twofold: heat and illumination for the city's inhabitants. A magical psychic amplifier called the Froygan Rectifier (located in the temple below the city, in area H10) was constructed by the Mystic Froygan to channel psychic energy to the topaline pyramid. When operated by a Mystic, the Rectifier caused the interior of the pyramid to warm up to 80°F and to be illuminated by the equivalent of bright sunlight, coming from various room ceilings and the top of the dome itself.

During the century that it took to build Topaline and construct the Rectifier, the city became known among the

Mystics as the greatest engineering feat they had ever undertaken. Topaline was mined from the mountain ranges 100 miles to the south, processed in the city, and exported to Mystic colonies on other worlds using the Travel Stone.

The reliance of Mystic commerce on the Travel Stone proved to be Topaline's undoing. Once the Travel Stones began to decay and shadows began to take note of the increasing number of *gates* opening up in the Void, one of the first places that the shadows investigated was Topaline. The shadows easily infiltrated the city and preyed upon Topaline's citizens. The shadow population exploded beyond control, so the Mystics decided to abandon their city using more sophisticated teleportation devices that they had constructed since the Travel Stones were first developed.

Stranded by the Mystics, most of the citizens of Topaline were turned into shadows. The town guard killed many of the undead monsters, but eventually they too became shadows. Now the city is home to the dead. Cold and dark, Topaline is haunted by the shadows of her former citizens. The homes are empty, the stores stand unattended, and the topaline factories have not been worked in centuries. What litter remained behind was "cleaned up" by a handful of passing adventurers a century ago before they, too, fell prey to the shadows.

It is easy for the PCs to enter one of the houses and climb the stairs to the roof to get a better idea of the city layout. Should the PCs attempt this, they can see the city's most prominent landmark, the large central town plaza (area D) where two towerlike structures stand (these are statues, but their features are indistinguishable at this distance in the pale moonlight). If the PCs decide not to investigate the plaza but spend time walking around sections of the city marked "C," there is a 1-in-10 chance per turn of encountering undead. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d10 and consult the sidebar "Random Monster Encounters in Topaline."

Shadows can be kept at bay by the equivalent of a *continual light* spell but will attack a party with a weaker source of illumination. They make their presence known and trail the party, waiting for the PCs' illumination to fail or for party members to step out of the light. Zombies, skeletons, and a lone wraith (at area H11) attack the party on sight, regardless of any illumination the party may have.

Any characters with the psionic powers of danger sense or spirit sense become uneasy while the party wanders through the city, even if the power is not immediately being used. No specific factual information will be gained—just a sense that something is bad or wrong.

D. Central Square.

> You have reached the central square of the city, where two large boulevards intersect. In the moonlight, the square appears huge, but you guess that it is probably a bow shot long and half a bow shot wide. Two 30′ tall statues stand at opposite ends of the long plaza. The western statue is of an eyeless woman with a staff leaning on the shoulder of a handsome man. The couple faces east. The statue at the east end of the plaza depicts a stern warrior, sword raised over his head in victory. He faces west.

Each statue rests on a 15′-square cube of marble that must be hollow, since there is an entrance in one side of each cube. Upon closer inspection, the PCs can make out inscriptions above the entry. The statues depict three major Mystic gods. The eyeless woman is Rujsha, goddess of justice, with her consort Gorn, god of knowledge. The warrior is Mintar, god of honor. The inscriptions on the statue bases are in the Mystic language. The base of Rujsha's and Gorn's statue reads: "The blind goddess sees all, the young god knows all." The base of the Mintar's statue proclaims: "Honor graces the worthy."

In the base of each statue, a flight of stairs descends to what once was the main entrance of the Mystic temple. The underground entrance to the temple itself was collapsed by the temple's current inhabitants (see area H11), but the wraith Ashzar has built its lair in the corridor at the base of both sets of the stairs. Refer to area H11 if the PCs decide to descend the stairs in the base of either statue.

Characters with spirit sense feel apprehensive while in the plaza. If this power is successfully used, the user knows that a powerful undead being is nearby, but he doesn't know exactly where it is. For each round characters spend on the square, there is a 10% cumulative chance that Ashzar the wraith will emerge from the base of one of the statues (if they haven't met it in a random encounter and destroyed it) and viciously attack the PCs (refer to area H11 for his statistics). If Ashzar is badly wounded or turned, it flees back down the stairs and hides. Later, it will search out the PCs and stalk them, relishing in the fear it inspires before it strikes. In this second encounter with the wraith, Ashzar fights to the death.

If the PCs decide to climb one of the statues (they are more than twice as tall as the two-story houses in areas C), they should be able to see large open plazas or parks to the east and west. Unlike the plaza to the west (area F), the park to the east (area E) is illuminated and green, in stark contrast to the rest of the city, which is dark and gray.

E. The Swan Park. In the east corner of the city, the Mystics built a small park surrounding a tower library dedicated to Gorn, god of knowledge. Since Gorn is a lawful-good deity, the park was sanctified and none of the cities' undead can encroach upon its grounds. Those inhabitants of Topaline who took refuge here during the disaster later attempted to escape to the Travel Stone, but none made it.

As soon as the PCs approach the park, read the following aloud:

> Unlike the rest of the city, which appears dark and lifeless, you see a park before you teeming with life. Insects chirp and buzz, birds flutter from tree to tree, and several swans swim about in a small pond. A large, vine-covered tower rises up at the center of the park, glowing with a pale blue light.

PCs entering the park immediately feel secure. There is plenty of fresh water available from a murmuring fountain adorned with graceful swan carvings, and several fruit trees grow near the pond. This is a place for the PCs to relax from the perils of the city, to rest, heal, and regain spells.

The doors of the tower are open, and the interior is cheerily illuminated. The tower has no floors, just bookcases. Ten levels of wrought iron catwalks and spiral stairs rise from the ground floor to the ceiling, allowing access to every square foot of the 100′-high bookcases

lining the walls. The Mystics used to joke that the tower was just one big bookcase.

The curator of the library is Kinguapus, a small creature with a lizard's head, a white-feathered body with wings ending in fingers, and a duck's yellow feet. Kinguapus is actually a shedu, but in his previous form he couldn't climb the spiral stairs very easily and get books down from shelves. In addition, his previous form was so imposing that people were afraid to return overdue books. So the Mystics and Kinguapus agreed that it would be better if he were to adopt a less-imposing form, for the good of the library and the community.

Kinguapus, a *polymorphed* lesser shedu: INT exceptional; AL LG; AC 4; MV 12, fly 24; HD 9+9; hp 61; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6; SA/SD psionics; MR 25%; SZ S (4′ tall); ML 16; XP 8,000; CPH. Psionics: PS = Int (16); PSPs 100; powers: astral projection, clairvoyance, contact, ectoplasmic form, ego whip, empathy, ESP, id insinuation, intellect fortress, invisibility, mental barrier, mind blank, mind thrust, mindlink, psionic blast, psychic crush, thought shield, tower of iron will.

Kinguapus didn't plan on the Mystics' deserting him at his post; he thought he would be a librarian for only a century or so. Now, three centuries have past since the Mystics fled (or 341 years, but "Who's counting?" as Kinguapus is fond of saying to no one in particular), leaving him holding the bag, or the library, so to speak.

Three centuries is a long time to spend in a library, and the shedu has spent most of it reading. As a result, he has acquired the knowledge of a few sages and can answer questions on Mystic architecture and engineering, art, astronomy, cryptography, ancient Mystic history, Mystic theology, and philosophy. Most of the books cover those topics, but the shedu has read all of them already (the good ones, at least). He is conversant in the reason for the Mystics' downfall ("I remember it like it was only yesterday.") and is more than willing to talk about any intelligent topic. He has also used his astral projection power for "vacations" when things seem particularly slow, so he doesn't feel trapped—except by his sense of duty.

Since it is unlikely that the PCs can speak either the shedu or Mystic language, Kinguapus uses his mindlink power to communicate with the PCs. After the fall of the city, Kinguapus made a new library rule: Everyone is welcome to read as much as they like in the library, but absolutely no books may be taken outside. As the PCs leave, he will ask them if they have taken any books from the premises and then use *ESP* to determine if they are lying. If the PCs want to do some reading, the shedu will be glad to lend them his *spectacles of comprehending languages* (almost all of the texts are in the Mystic language). He will use all of the psionic powers at his disposal to make sure that his spectacles and any library books remain in the library.

The Mystics left behind several books on the subject of their Travel Stones, and the shedu is delighted to get them. Kinguapus returns with a project report from the senior Mystic involved in the Travel Stones' design and creation. Using the shedu's spectacles, a PC can read the report in 20 hours minus one hour per point of the character's intelligence. The report explains the principles of the Stones' operation, as described in the "For the Dungeon Master" section, and concludes with a caution against their extended use:

> "Thus, while Travel Stones would make transport from world to world fast and easy, they should not remain in use for protracted periods of time. It is my opinion that a Stone might become unstable after as little as 25 years, after which travelers would be exposed to the harsh environment of the Void in-between the entry and exit *gates*. Furthermore, I believe that the denizens of the Void, while scarce, might begin to notice the *gates*. I cannot begin to speculate what repercussions that could have.
>
> "Once the Stones age enough, it is conceivable that one of these *gates* might get stuck open, or 'hyper-charged.' Although some of my esteemed colleagues doubt that this could ever occur, I believe that a hypercharged *gate* could be closed only by discharging its teleportation potential through an appropriate conductor, like one of the planar amulets currently under development.
>
> "In closing, I recommend that new means of mass interplanar transit—like that proposed by the planar amulet project—be developed, which could be phased in after a period of 25 years."

It might be helpful for the DM to photocopy the above section of text so the PCs can study it closely, since it gives the clue to completing the adventure.

Kinguapus knows very little about the "planar amulets," only that they were under development in the temple underneath the town square at the time of the fall. Although the main entrance to the temple (area H11) has been blocked by rubble, there is another way to get into the temple complex. Kinguapus suggests that the PCs search out the wizard Nightshade. She has done some research in the library from time to time and once hinted that she

Random Monster Encounters in Topaline (Roll 1d10)

1-2 **Skeletons** (2-20): INT non; AL N; AC 7; MV 12; HD 1; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SD edged weapons cause 1 hp damage; MR special; SZ M; ML special; XP 65; MC.

3 **Zombies** (3-12): INT non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 2; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; MR special; SZ M; ML special; XP 65; MC.

4-9 **Shadows** (1-4): INT low; AL CE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5; SA strength drain; SD +1 or better weapon to hit, 90% undetectable except in bright light; immune to cold, *sleep, charm, hold;* MR nil; SZ M; ML special; XP 650; MC.

10 **Ashzar** (wraith): INT very; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12, fly 24 (B); HD 5+3; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA energy drain; SD silver or magical weapons to hit; SZ M; ML 15; XP 3,000; MC. Ashzar lairs in area H11 under the central town plaza (area D). If slain in a random encounter, its lair will be empty except for its treasure.

had found a secret way into the temple beneath the city.

The library has several town maps on file (but no maps of the temple, unfortunately), and Kinguapus can point out areas of interest (like the Seeing Pool in area F and Nightshade's garden in area G). The wizard once invited the shedu to tea and gave him directions to her home, but Kinguapus was forced to decline her invitation since his sense of duty prevents him from leaving the library until the Mystics return. With the shedu's advice, the party should have no trouble finding the entrance to Nightshade's domain.

F. The Seeing Pool. In the west corner of the city, the Mystics built a small park surrounding a pool they enchanted to augment their clairvoyant powers. The park is surrounded by a 10'-high wall pierced by two gates. One of the gates stands closed but unlocked, since the boggles use the park as their quarry. Four small marble gazebos, one in each corner of the park, have been slowly dismantled by the boggles for their master's sculptures.

The park is dimly illuminated by a glowing pool of water at its center. A colony of sentient, psionic yellow mold has sprung up around the pool. Anyone who attempts to drink from the pool's waters is subject to the mold's psionic attacks. Until its PSPs are depleted, the mold attempts to establish telepathic contact with a victim, then uses three id insinuations. Once this is done, the mold attempts to mindwipe its victim. Mental suggestions are used to draw victims closer to the pool to examine the water (and thus be caught).

Yellow mold: INT low; AL N; AC 9; MV 0; HD nil; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA psionics, poisonous spores, suggestion twice/day, victim of suggestion must roll intelligence check on 1d20 if save is failed (if check fails, victim loses 1 point of intelligence); SD affected only by fire, immune to psionic attacks unless attacker can communicate with plants; SZ M; ML nil; XP 270; MC & CPH. Psionics: PS 15; PSPs 40; powers: id insinuation, psionic sense (120' range, no cost), mindwipe.

While standing within 10' of the glowing pool, a PC's clairsentient powers (e.g., spirit sense, danger sense, object reading, sensitivity to psychic impressions, clairvoyance, etc.) cost half the normal strength points and gain a +2 bonus to the power check. Anyone drinking from the water permanently gains the powers endowed by the Travel Stone. (If the DM does not wish psionics to become a permanent fixture of his campaign, he may disallow this.)

In addition, each character who drinks from the pool receives the following vision:

> The water slides down your throat like an icicle, numbing your mouth and stabbing your stomach. Your mind wrenches—and you are suddenly floating around a huge octagonal room. The chamber is faintly lit by light from the ceiling, soaring 100' high. In the center of the room is a large octagonal pillar, raised 50' in the air. Stairs snake up its sides. At the pillar's summit, a glowing orb rests on a pedestal, tended by three men in hooded gray robes. One rests his hand on the orb and pauses for a moment in concentration. Slowly, the light emanating from the ceiling brightens until it glares like sunlight. After another wrenching sensation, you find yourself once again standing before the pool in the city.

This is a vision of the Froygan Rectifier, the psionic amplifier that uses psychic energy to heat and illuminate the city, as it appeared over three centuries ago when it was still tended by Mystics. Characters with the power of clairvoyance will be granted an additional vision:

> Your sight swims, and then a large black octagonal door looms before you. As you stare into the portal's wide keyhole, shadows leap out to engulf you. You jump back in surprise to find yourself standing once again with your comrades beside the glowing pool.

This is a vision of the entrance to area H10. In order to gain access to this chamber, the PCs must discover the room's key, hidden in area H8 and guarded by shadows.

G. Nightshade's Garden. Topaline gathered quite a reputation in the literature written by the Mystics on other worlds, although more praise was devoted to the city before the shadow massacres three centuries ago.

A wizard of Waterdeep named Nightshade, while completing some research about planar travel, came across a reference to the Mystics' pioneering research in that area. With a little bit of advice from a sage (well worth the extravagant price), she was able to gather enough information about Topaline that a *teleport without error* spell (read from a scroll) would have at least some chance of success. She survived the extremely risky journey and has been living in the city ever since. Nightshade has always been a dabbler in the dark art of necromancy, so her knowledge of undead allowed her to secure a safe haven in a what used to be a large enclosed park.

Sometimes Nightshade works on research at the library (area E), but Kinguapus annoys her. Often she ends up working on research at home. She is fascinated by psionics, but due to her unwillingness to discipline herself to that study, she can never become a psionicist. She has no abilities as a wild talent. Her undead servants offer her little amusement, but she is always glad to receive more servants from Gantus, the crypt thing who lives in area B. By far, her most intimate relationship is with "the Baron," a mysterious being who calls himself a planar traveler, currently residing in the ruined temple (see area H) beneath the town's central plaza. The Baron is moody and often unpredictably violent, but Nightshade has a difficult time resisting his charismatic personality.

G1. Warded Gates. The entrance to the gardens has been heavily warded with magical runes to keep away undead, especially shadows and wraiths. The gates are closed but unlocked; Nightshade does not want to discourage living visitors (at least, not much).

G2. Guards. Nightshade has placed a small garrison of **skeletons** (AC 4; hp 7 each; chain mail, shield, long sword; see "Random Monster Encounters in Topaline" sidebar for complete statistics) near the entrance to weed out weak visitors unworthy of her attention. Their armor and swords are in reasonably good condition, but other than that, the skeletons have no treasure.

G3. The Perfumed Maze. Soon after her arrival in Topaline, Nightshade animated a few dozen undead servants and replanted the enclosed park with a maze of nocturnal flowering shrubbery

that has sedative pollen. The wizard freely gives the crypt thing Gantus several doses of the pollen for use on his models. In return, Gantus gives her the models after he has finished sculpting them, and Nightshade turns them into more undead servants (all of the zombies currently roaming the streets of Topaline were once captured by Gantus and animated by Nightshade).

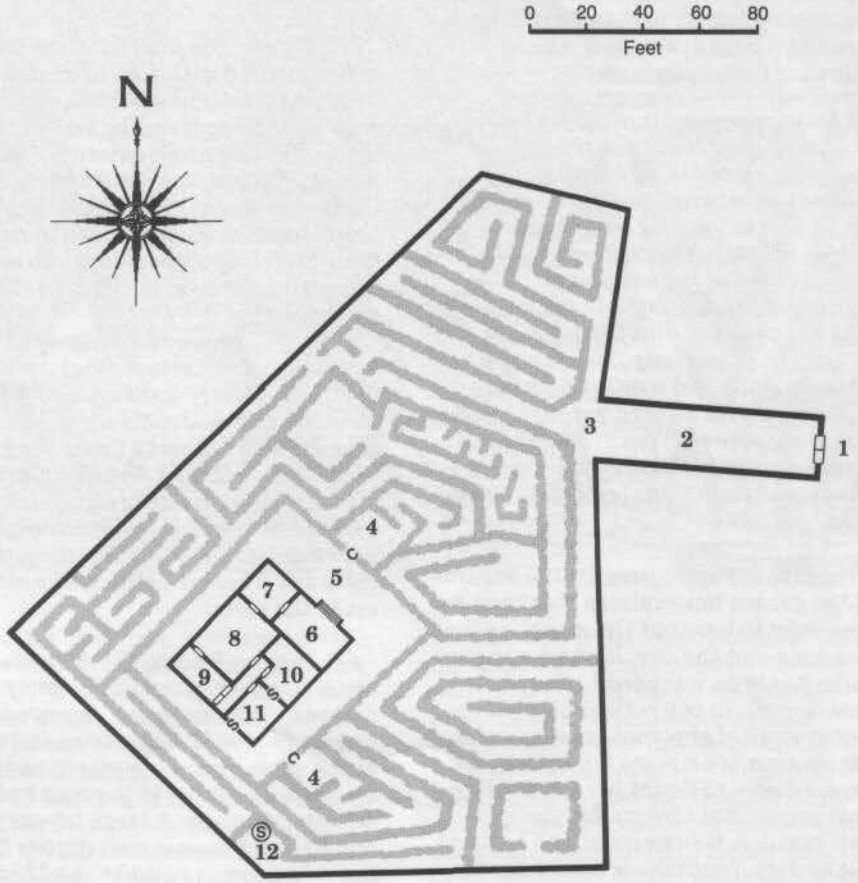
The maze is formed by carefully planted hedges of moonflower, a nocturnally blooming tree with delicate white flowers that give off an intoxicating perfume (somewhat like the sickly sweet smell of gardenias). Any druid of 3rd or higher level can correctly identify the hedges and warn that the blooms can puff small clouds of sedative pollen at creatures that pass by. The corridors of the maze are planted so that anyone walking through the hedgerows is subject to one puff of pollen every turn (PCs must save vs. poison or pass out for 1-4 turns).

It will take the party 1-4 turns to successfully navigate the maze to area G4, minus one turn for every six points of intelligence possessed by the smartest member of the party. Any PC with an 18 intelligence can guide the party through the maze in one turn.

Should the PCs decide to burn the hedges, Nightshade will be extremely upset. She gathers her ogre skeleton bodyguards at area G4 and hunts the PCs down. Once they have been captured, slain, and turned into zombies, they will be forced to replant the hedges they burned down.

NIGHTSHADE'S GARDEN

Area G



G4. Guard Post. Nightshade has placed a powerful bodyguard at each entrance to the inner courtyard of the maze, but these ogre skeletons ignore the PCs unless attacked. The wizard uses the skeletons as bouncers if the PCs become unruly during their visit.

Ogre skeletons (2): INT non; AL N; AC 6; MV 12; HD 6; hp 33, 27; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD edged weapons cause 1 hp damage; MR special; SZ L; ML special; XP 650; MC. Armed with only a stone club, each skeleton has no treasure.

G5. The Inner Courtyard.

You have discovered an inner courtyard at the heart of the maze. At its center stands a rickety house. It is a wonder the structure stands at all, as the walls slant at impossible angles. The house looks like it is about to collapse at any minute. There are no windows in the single-story building (perhaps that explains why it hasn't collapsed yet), and the only apparent entry is across the front porch.

No one ever said skeletons and zombies were good carpenters, but to Nightshade this humble abode is home. Only Nightshade's proficiency in engineering keeps the structure standing to this day, with supporting struts bracing the walls and sagging parts of the ceiling inside. The wizard makes up for the disgraceful appearance of her house by planting a beautiful garden of nocturnal flowers (all of which are important spell components for potions and certain spells) in the front yard. Gardens planted with fungi and other nocturnal vegetables have been planted along both sides of the house.

G6. Front Porch. The porch creaks at every step, so rogues have a 30% penalty when attempting to move silently here. The front door is *wizard*

locked at the 10th level of ability. As soon as anyone approaches within 10' of the door, a *magic mouth* cries out: "Darling, we have visitors! Time to powder your nose!" The PCs should be able to hack their way through the rickety walls of the house in about two rounds, but this would so infuriate Nightshade that she would try to destroy the party. If the PCs wait at the door, read the following to the players:

> A female voice calls out from inside. "Just a minute! I'm not proper!" After a few minutes, a frail young woman of ethereal beauty opens the door. She is wearing a light-blue dress to match her cerulean eyes and has a charcoal-colored shawl wrapped around her delicate shoulders to contrast with her wheaten hair. The young lady flashes you a fragile smile and speaks to you in Common with a slight yet highly pleasing accent. "You must be tired from your ordeal through my garden! Please come in. Can I offer you some tea?"

Nightshade apologizes for the hazards of her garden but explains that they are necessary to keep out the monsters that wander about the city. If anyone in the party has been wounded by her skeletons, she offers two potions of *healing*. Her gesture of apparent good will and her concern are sincere but spring more from a desire to flaunt her superiority than any actual concern for the PCs' well being. A noblewoman and a charming hostess, Nightshade would never harm guests, so long as they behave properly and show her proper respect. Unless the PCs watch what they say and do while in her presence, they could end up as the next skeletons guarding the entrance to the sorceress's gardens.

Nightshade: AL N; AC 6; MV 12; M10 (necromancer); hp 28; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; ML 16; S 7, D 14, C 9, I 16, W 7, Ch 17; XP 6,000; poisoned dagger (1-4 hp damage). Spells: *chill touch, detect undead, light, magic missile, protection from evil* (cast), *continual light, detect invisibility, invisibility, spectral hand, web, blink, dispel magic, fireball, hold undead, dimension door, enervation, stoneskin* (cast), *animate dead, summon shadow, teleport.* She always wears *bracers of defense AC 6.* In the moments before she answered the door, Nightshade cast *protection from evil* and *stoneskin* spells on herself. If the party forces its way into her home, she calls for her two ogre skeleton bodyguards at areas G4 and attempts to destroy the ill-mannered adventurers. She will flee if reduced to 14 hp or less, only to strike from hiding later.

G7. Foyer. The interior of the house is illuminated with pale *continual light.* This small antechamber has numerous pegs protruding from the walls and an almost lifelike marble statue of a strong, vigilant warrior standing in the northwest corner of the room. Nightshade motions for the PCs to hang up their traveling apparel and join her in the sitting room (area G8) for a chat and some tea.

If the PCs praise the wizard on the virtuosity of her statue, Nightshade blushes modestly and says that a friend gave her that statue as a gift. Indeed, this statue is Gantus's finest work and worth over 1,500 gp. The two black cloaks already hanging on pegs in the room have been imbued with only minor enchantments to make them water resistant. There is nothing else of interest in the room.

G8. Sitting Room. The wizard's house has been almost completely furnished by gifts from the Baron, who resides in area H. The chairs and table in the sitting room are strong and sturdy, quite a contrast to the frail and delicate sorceress. A large tapestry hanging on the west wall depicts Topaline when it was ruled by the Mystics. This piece of art is easily worth 2,000 gp for its historical value alone, but it is the only noteworthy furnishing.

Nightshade invites the PCs to sit down and relax. She then disappears into area G9 to fire up the stove and set the tea pot to boiling. Once the tea has been prepared, Nightshade engages in polite conversation ("So, where are you all from? Why are you here?") She listens attentively to whatever the PCs care to discuss and will do whatever she can to put her guests at ease (remember her high charisma). This beautiful woman is extremely susceptible to flattery, although she will try to deflect further praise by blushing with false modesty.

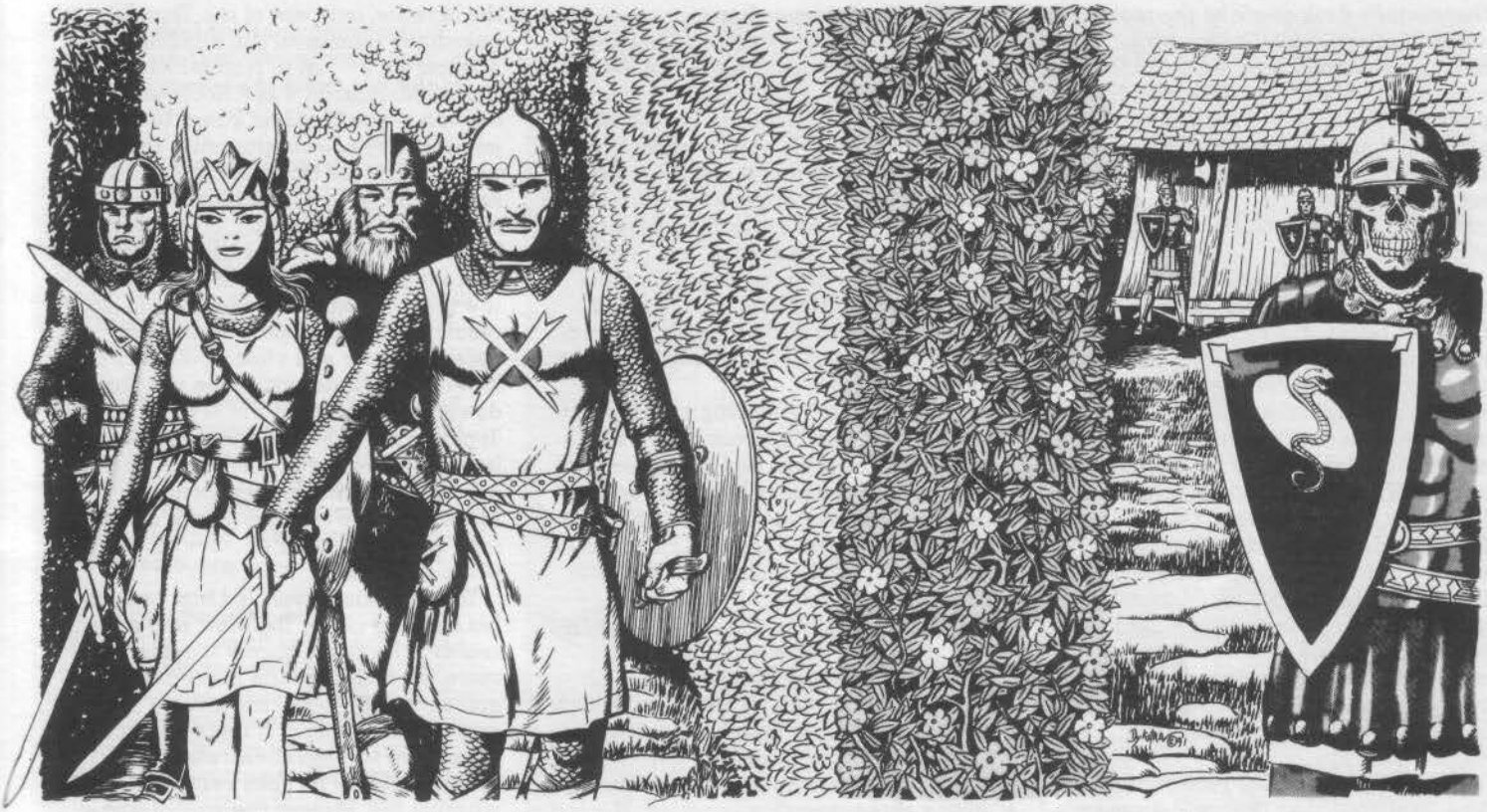
First and foremost, Nightshade is lonely. Her gullible nature leads her to be easily duped or fooled, and this has brought much pain into this beautiful wizard's life. Many ambitious male wizards have made romantic advances just so they could copy her spell books. As soon as they had what they wanted, they forgot they knew her. Originally the youngest daughter from a noble house of Waterdeep, Nightshade became increasingly disillusioned with life in the Forgotten Realms. She became obsessed with escape, and thus began her eerie fascination with two of the most arcane forms of escape: death and planar travel.

The wizard adopted a new name that she felt summarized her nature: a flower growing in the dark, longing for the attention of light yet capable of flourishing without it. To Nightshade, good and evil are irrelevant. Her pain, her losses, her studies, her discoveries, her beauty—these are important and transcend any petty moral distractions.

Nightshade's extreme impulsiveness is what brought her here. Two days after reading about the Mystics in Waterdeep, she spent her share of the family inheritance on consultations with a sage, then purchased a scroll with a *teleport without error* spell (she felt the risk was worth it). A day later, Nightshade walked triumphantly into Topaline's gates and began a new life in the undead-ridden city.

Certainly life in Topaline has not been easy, but most of all it has been lonely. Accustomed to a constant flood of praise from servants and suitors, Nightshade wants nothing more than to hear compliments about her knowledge and skill at magic, her intelligence, and her beauty. Luckily for her, she discovered the Baron in the ruins of the temple (area H), easily accessible from her house. The Baron sensed what the wizard needed because he too needed a sort of companionship. Nightshade alternates between worshiping the Baron and hating him (her current feelings toward him), since in his moodiness the Baron often speaks the truth, something that Nightshade rarely enjoys hearing.

If the PCs explain their dilemma with the Travel Stone to Nightshade, they find that the sorceress is more that eager to share her wealth of knowledge ("Did you know I'm an authority on the subject?"). Having spent many long hours in the library (area E) poring over the Mystic's technical journals, she can reveal that the party must discharge the *gate*'s teleportation potential by



touching the Travel Stone with an appropriate magical conductor. She knows that a suitable conductor, a Mystic *planar amulet,* is currently in the possession of her hated friend, the Baron. Once the PCs rest up and recover from the hazards of the city, Nightshade will guide them to area G12 so that they can travel to area H.

During the length of the PCs' stay, Nightshade proves to be a gracious and attentive hostess, providing that the adventurers aren't rude and don't attempt to invade her privacy by snooping around her house. She allows the PCs to camp in area G5 or G8, whichever they prefer, but the wizard warns the PCs not to enter her personal chambers.

The DM is encouraged to play Nightshade's role to the hilt, drawing perhaps on the affectations of a demure yet coquettish lady of Southern gentility and charm. A gentle South Carolina accent would suit Nightshade perfectly.

G9. Kitchen and Pantry. Nightshade keeps all of her cooking and eating supplies in this room and the small adjoining closet. There is a small iron cooking stove in the southwest corner of the room, but there is nothing here to interest the characters except evidence that Nightshade is a vegetarian (a fact that can be learned by raiding her pantry and discovering only pickled cucumbers, beets, and the like). Nightshade grows all her food in the garden in area 5, and the PCs are encouraged by the wizard to help themselves. All of the food is wholesome and appetizing (thanks to the skillful use of spices).

G10. Nightshade's Bedroom. The door to this chamber and has been sealed with a *wizard lock* spell cast at the 10th level of experience.

A large double bed is set against the northeast wall, and a huge 20′ long by 10′ high *mirror of vanity* has been hung on the wall across from the door. This mirror is part of Nightshade's legacy from her Waterdeep inheritance, and it is her most treasured possession. The mirror is attuned to the command phrase, "How do I look?" and will smother the speaker of this phrase with waves of soothing praise and flattery ("You know, darling, those robes look marvelous! And your hair! Did I ever tell you how much I love your hair?"). Anyone who gazes into the mirror without uttering the command phrase must make a saving throw vs. spells or admire his own reflection for an hour. Finally, the mirror can be shrunken with a command word ("Compact") to 4″ × 2″ size so that it can easily fit inside a purse or handbag. The mirror is not sentient but could probably be sold to an extremely wealthy and vain noble for about 5,000 gp.

A chest of drawers beside the mirror is full of clothing for a rich noblewoman but contains little of value to anyone else. The revolving secret door allows access to Nightshade's study (area G11).

G11. Nightshade's Study. This chamber is Nightshade's all-purpose room, and its door is *wizard locked* at the 10th level of experience. A bookshelf covers the northwest wall, and a work table is pushed up against the southwest wall. A large desk stands in the center of the chamber. Most of the research in this room deals with planar travel and necromancy, though Nightshade has been looting the city for all the papers and literature she can find.

Currently, the papers spread out on

the wizard's desk describe the members of the Mystics' fabled bodyguard, called Shadowmasters. These warriors led a monastic life of deprivation and discipline in the pursuit of their mental and physical training. Eventually, through their devotion to the way of the shadow, certain of these warriors became shades (see *Monster Manual II)* with access to the plane of Shadow.

Since examining the literature and realizing that the Baron had to be a Shadowmaster, dating back from a time before the shadow massacres over three centuries ago (shades are practically immortal), Nightshade has begun the arduous process of researching a shade's abilities in the hopes of becoming one herself. There is enough information in this room to complete the task; all Nightshade requires is more time, about eight months. A wizard versed in the art of necromancy could piece together the ritual from the ancient texts in nine months. For a wizard in an unrelated field, the research would take two years of devoted attention. The books, if they can be transported, are worth 2,000 gp.

If the PCs search the room, there is a 1-in-10 chance that they will discover a loose floorboard under the desk. Nightshade has hidden her spell books here. The spell books include those spells she memorized today plus *detect magic, read magic, shield, detect invisibility, wizard lock,* and *feign death.* There is also a small box hidden beneath the books that contains a large amount of costume jewelry (worth 100 gp for the lot) plus a gold ring (worth 300 gp) and a platinum necklace (worth 700 gp).

The work table appears to be set up for a chemical experiment of some kind. On a shelf above the table, Nightshade keeps 10 vials of potions, distilled from the plants in her garden:

—Two green-hued antidotes for the moonflower pollen (they confer permanent immunity).

—One clear potion of *sleep* (save vs. spells or sleep for 2-8 hours).

—One clear potion of poison.

—A yellow *philter of love* (for use on the Baron in revenge some day).

—Five blue potions of *healing.*

None of the vials are marked, and the sorceress tells them apart by their colors and the shapes of the vials. When the PCs first enter her house, Nightshade offers two of the *healing* potions if they appear to have been gravely wounded by her guardians.

Nightshade spends much of her time in this room when not admiring herself in her mirror, but will likely hear intruders stomping about in her bedroom (the wooden floor is quite squeaky). The wizard usually lounges about her private chambers wearing only a diaphanous chemise, the better to admire her perfect form in the mirror. She puts on a modest dress when dealing with the PCs in the sitting room or elsewhere, but no one is permitted in her bedchamber (her most vulnerable sanctuary) unless invited.

If the PCs start snooping about Nightshade's study and bedroom, the wizard will grab a bathrobe and try to use her *web* spell on the party until her ogre skeleton guards can arrive in 2-5 rounds and dismember the helpless PCs. Her *stoneskin* spell should protect her from most physical damage, but if she is badly wounded, she will use her *dimension door* spell to get out of the house and hide in the gardens until the PCs emerge. While the PCs founder through the sleep-inducing maze, she will stalk the party invisibly, waiting until some of the PCs succumb to the sedative effects of the moonflower pollen. Having cast a *blink* spell upon herself, she will use *fireball* on the most dangerous opponents, followed by her other attack spells. She will then go after the party with her poisoned dagger (type A poison). If her assaults appear to have no effect, she will *teleport* to area H3 to recover and prepare her vengeance on the PCs.

G12. Concealed Trapdoor. A trapdoor covered with moss is set into the ground in the northwest corner of this secluded section of the maze. There is a 2-in-6 chance that it will be discovered by PCs searching the area. The trapdoor opens to reveal spiral stairs leading down to a corridor that heads off north to area H. Nightshade will never tell the PCs the location of this secret door unless they have completed their convalescence and not abused her hospitality. Only then will the wizard escort them here and wish them good luck in obtaining the *planar amulet* that will close the *gate* plaguing Silver Rise. Otherwise, the PCs will have to stumble upon the trapdoor by chance.

H. The Underground Temple. After the fall of Topaline and the desertion of the Mystics, only one of the Temple's guardians remained, the Shadowmaster Mishcaron, known to Nightshade as the Baron. Mishcaron was a noble and a captain of the Topaline guard before he joined the Shadowmaster cult, three years before the city's fall. He quickly rose in the order's ranks and passed the ritual of Shadowmaking, after which he became a shade. Converting a human soul into the stuff of shadow brings with it a taint of madness and evil, and as a result of his conversion, Mishcaron became moody and violent, often challenging his superiors. When the Shadowmasters followed the Mystics after Topaline's fall, Mishcaron remained behind. Using an *amulet of the planes* left behind by his former mentors, Mishcaron traveled the planes of existence and dwelled for decades on the plane of Shadow.

Yet all of his travels led him back to his starting place, Topaline, and after a century the shade hardly traveled anymore. He collapsed the major temple entrance to preserve his privacy but was shocked when a human wizard discovered the secret entrance to his lair, the temple he once swore to defend with his life. Hoping the wizard would not guess his true nature, Mishcaron adopted the Baron pseudonym—he had been a noble once, when Topaline was a thriving city.

Mishcaron built relationships with a few of the shadows that roam the city. Former members of the town guard, they vaguely remember a time when they followed the shade's orders. In the afterlife, the shadows follow the shade more out of habit and respect than out of any fear of retribution or discipline. The Baron has cut himself off from all human contact save that with Nightshade, whom he finds attractive, vulnerable, and weak. He plays with her emotions for amusement, alternating between the flattery she needs and the mockery that shatters her self-esteem like a pebble cracks a mirror. He will not find the PCs' intrusion welcome. He is described at area H9.

If the PCs are guided to the secret entrance of the temple complex by Nightshade, she advises them to turn right after passing through a secret door. She explains that she keeps some of her prized moonflower wine down the corridor to the left and warns the party that the iron guardian she has animated to guard her wine has been in-

structed to deal with intruders rather harshly. With that, the wizard heads back to her gardens to await the return of the PCs.

H1. Nightshade's Guard. Nightshade has placed one of her prized **ogre skeletons** (hp 36; see area G4 for complete statistics) here to protect her precious cache of gold—she has no moonflower wine, and lied to the PCs to deter them from exploring this section of the temple complex.

H2. Empty Storeroom. The temple once stored its grain in these chambers. The grain left behind was long ago eaten or fouled by rats, which died out or fled into the wilderness soon after the Mystics left. There is nothing of interest in these chambers.

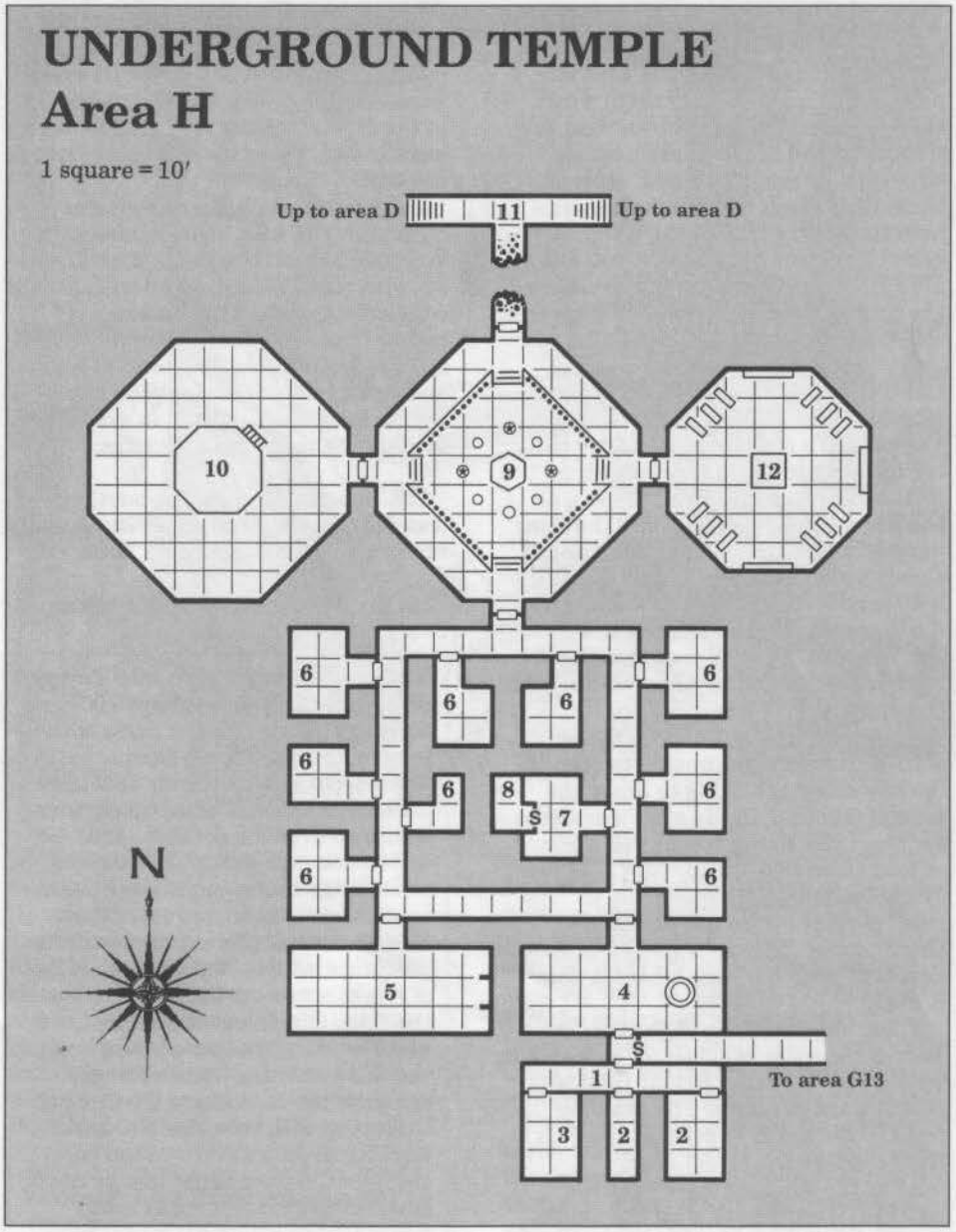
H3. Nightshade's Cache. Rather than store her wealth in her house, the wizard decided to lock it up here. The door to the room is *wizard locked* at the 10th level of experience. Inside are four unlocked chests. The lid of the first chest has been spring-loaded to spray moonflower pollen in the opener's face (save vs. poison or sleep for 1-4 turns). This chest contains 3,635 sp.

The second chest contains 1,250 gp and a scroll with one *continual light* spell cast at the 10th level. Curled on top of the treasure is an iron cobra.

Iron cobra: INT non; AL N; AC 0; MV 12; HD 1; hp 7; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA poison; SD normal weapons cause half damage, saves as 12th-level wizard, 50% chance to hide in shadows; SZ S; ML 20; XP 270; FF/52 (updated to the AD&D 2nd Edition rules in DRAGON issue #164).

This is the iron guardian that Nightshade might have warned the PCs about. The cobra's fangs are loaded with six doses of type A poison (save or take 15 hp damage). The guardian launches itself at the opener of the chest, gaining a +2 bonus on surprise. Once the chest has been opened, the snake attempts to hide in shadows, waiting for a chance to take a character from behind (gains a +4 bonus to hit, with no dexterity bonuses to AC).

Inscribed on the cobra's belly is its name, Steelstrike. If the PCs somehow manage to immobilize the cobra without destroying it, the guardian will follow the instructions of whoever has last pronounced its name. For a detailed description of what tasks an iron cobra can perform, the DM is referred to the FIEND FOLIO tome and DRAGON issue #164 ("The Mechanics of the Iron Cobra"), the latter of which adds much useful information but is not required for game play.



H4. Well Room. This chamber once contained barrels of ale and water for the priests that lived and worked in the temple complex. Now, only broken pieces of wood litter the floor. There is a 30'-deep well in the east end of this chamber, but there is little else to interest the PCs here.

H5. Dining Hall. The priests of the temple gathered here for their meals. In front of the large fireplace at the west end of the chamber, rusted and bent iron cooking implements are scattered about on the floor. The only serviceable furniture left behind was given to Nightshade by the Baron, while they were still on speaking terms with each other. The walls appear to have once been decorated with frescoes, but someone has smeared mud and filth all over them.

H6. Priests' Living Quarters. The temple priests once lived in these nine chambers. The Mystics took all their personal belongings with them when they departed three centuries ago, and the Baron and his shadows have destroyed whatever remained. Most of these rooms look as though they once held small shrines, but the icons have been ripped down and destroyed. Like area H5, the frescoes that once adorned the walls have been scratched away and smeared with mud.

H7. Chapel. The decor of this room closely resembles that of areas H6, except that a consecrated altar to the lawful-good deity Gorn rests against the west wall. Despite his best efforts, all of the Baron's attempts to defile the altar have failed. A catch under the altar, if slowly pulled out of the wall (this takes 2-8 rounds), moves the altar aside, revealing a secret door leading to area H8. Beings of evil alignment suffer 1-10 hp damage per round when within 5′ of the altar.

Aware of the secret door in the west wall of the room but unable to open it (he has never been able to brave the pain of standing in the altar's presence for long), the Baron has placed a guard of four **shadows** (hp 16, 14, 12, 11; see "Random Monster Encounters in Topaline" sidebar for complete statistics) in this chamber, in case Nightshade should decide to poke her nose where it doesn't belong.

These shadows lurk in the four corners of the room, waiting for a chance to strike with surprise. Bright light will reveal their presence. The shadows fight to the death to prevent the PCs from opening the secret door.

After the shadows have been dispatched, if a priest of good alignment pauses to offer a prayer to Gorn, he will be granted a vision similar to the one described in area F. If the PC is both lawful and good, he will receive two visions, both similar to the ones described in area F.

H8. The Key Room. This chamber was warded by the Mystics to resist any penetration by clairvoyance or planar travel (including *dimension door* and *teleport* spells). At the center of the dark room, a small wooden box rests on a short stone pedestal. The box itself is carved maple, depicting the creation story of the Mystic religion, in which Rujsha, goddess of justice, formed the world from her great cloak and set it motion. It is worth 250 gp for its exceptional workmanship. Carved on the lid in the Mystic tongue is the following inscription: "Open me and bring light to the city."

The box is unlocked and contains a large iron key with an octagonal grip. Wrapped around the key is a necklace set with small beads carved with Mystic religious symbols. This necklace of prayer beads has one *bead of atonement,* one *bead of blessing,* one *bead of karma,* and three *beads of curing.* The key opens the octagonal doors in area H9, leading to the Froygan Rectifier.

H9. Mystic Temple. The southern doors of this chamber are massive and require an open doors check to budge. The wrought iron portals are inscribed with the dedication: "To the Greater Glory of the Gods of Topaline."

> You push the doors open into a huge octagonal chamber, perhaps 100′ across. Here, as in other parts of the temple, the walls have been scratched—only here they have also been smeared with dried blood, turned brown over the decades. A 10′-wide colonnade skirts the chamber, while at its center eight large pedestals are arrayed in a square. Three 20′-tall statues still stand atop their pedestals, while the dashed remains of five others have been strewn about the floor. One intact statue depicts a blind woman, another a young man, the third a strong warrior. At the center of the chamber, a shallow pit flickering with pale blue fire casts shifting shadows everywhere, especially in the colonnade. Double doors stand to the north and the east, while a large octagonal portal has been set into the west wall.

PCs who received a vision of an octagonal door, either in Gorn's chapel (area H7) or at the Seeing Pool (area F), immediately recognize that the door in the west wall matches the one seen in the vision. Baron Mishcaron hides in the pale, flickering shadows in the colonnade, near the octagonal door, along with six **shadows** (hp 24, 22, 21, 19, 18, 17, 15; see "Random Monster Encounters" sidebar for complete statistics). The octagonal door is sentient (see area H10) and will open only to one bearing the key from area H8.

Baron Mishcaron, shade and Shadowmaster: INT exceptional; AL NE; AC 1; MV 12; Psi3/F8; hp 48 (base); THAC0 12; #AT 2 (staff or shuriken) or 1 (shuriken used with ballistic attack power); Dmg by weapon type; SA psionics, specialized with staff (+1 to hit/+2 to damage), variable bonuses to hit for strength (for staff) and dexterity (for shuriken), ballistic attack power boosts shuriken damage to 1-6 hp at 30-yard range with no range penalties; SD psionics, immune to disease, regenerates 1 hp/turn, regenerates lost body parts (except head) in 1-4 weeks, *shadow-walk* to plane of Shadow in one round, create 2-5 *shadow images* within 30′; S 17, D 17, C 16, I 15, W 17, Ch 15 (base scores); MR nil or 40%; SZ M; ML 17; XP 7,000; MM2/108 with modifications.

Psionics: psychokinesis (primary) and psychometabolism; PSPs 49 (59 with *ioun stone*); animate shadow (PS 14), ballistic attack (PS 14), biofeedback (PS 14), body equilibrium (PS 13), cell adjustment (PS 13), control light (PS 15), detonate (PS 13), metamorphosis (PS 10; gained after the Baron became a shade, this bonus power replaces shape alteration in the AD&D 1st Edition psionics rules), mind blank (PS 10, defense), molecular agitation (PS 17), telekinesis (PS 14), tower of iron will (PS 15, defense).

Baron Mishcaron, whose background and personality are described at area H, has long black hair and purple eyes, and he is clean shaven. He wears dark gray and black clothing with a long black cloak, and uses the following items:

—*girdle of armor class 4.*

—*shadow staff +2* named Umbra (this adds 25 percentage points to a shade's or rogue's chances of hiding in shadows; XP 750).

—16 shuriken concealed in clothing (Oriental throwing stars: cost 3 sp ea., 1 lb. ea., 1-4 hp damage, small size, piercing weapon, speed factor 2, range 20/40/60 yards, from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook,* pages 94, 95, and 102).

He also keeps a burned-out *ioun stone* in orbit around his head (it adds 10 to his PSPs). Baron Mishcaron replenishes his shuriken from the eastern cabinet in area H12.

The Shadowmasters were a cult of Mystics dedicated to the defense of Topaline over 300 years ago. Given psionic training before the start of their

military careers, the Shadowmasters were expected to excel in but a few psionic powers, as opposed to other Mystic psionicists who strove for breadth in their psionic training. Like most Shadowmasters, the Baron learned powers from the disciplines of psychokinesis and psychometabolism. After their seventh level of military training, initiates in the cult had to pass the rite of Shadowmaking. Those who passed became shades; those who failed went insane and became shadows.

Like all shades, Shadowmasters drew their strength from the interplay of light and dark. Mishcaron's special abilities are affected by the area's illumination, as shown here:

—Bright light (e.g., bright sunlight, center of *continual light* spell, light without shadows): −2 to all ability scores (S 15, D 15, C 14, I 13, W 15, Ch 13; AC 3); −2 hp/HD (hp 16 with constitution-bonus loss); MR nil; saves vs. spells at −4.

—Average light (e.g., normal daylight with shade or clouds, center of *light* spell, outline of *faerie fire* spell): −1 to all ability scores (S 16, D 16, C 15, I 14, W 16, Ch 14; AC 4); −1 hp/HD (hp 32 with constitution-bonus loss); MR 40%.

—Twilight (e.g., sunset, average indoor light, edges of *light* and *continual light* spells): normal ability scores and hit points; MR 40%; can *shadow-walk;* 59% chance to hide in shadows.

—Shadowy light (e.g., dimly lit room or forest, underground torchlight, normal plane of Shadow illumination): +2 to all ability scores (S 18/51, D 19, C 18, I 17, W 19, Ch 17; AC 0); +1 hp/HD (hp 66 with constitution bonus); MR 40%; can *shadow-walk* and create *shadow images;* 59% chance to hide in shadows.

—Night/dark (e.g., a room with windows at night, a moonless or cloudy night sky): +1 to ability scores (S 18/01, D 18, C 17, I 16, W 18, Ch 16; AC 0); hp 58 with constitution bonus; MR 40%; can *shadow-walk;* 59% chance to hide in shadows.

—Complete darkness: no bonuses, penalties, or special shadow-related abilities; MR nil.

For the purposes of this adventure, Topaline is assumed to be under permanent night/dark conditions unless the PCs bring in illumination or an NPC changes the lighting. The DM should use his own judgment in detailing local illumination.

As soon as the PCs enter the chamber,

Mishcaron (hiding in the shadows) uses his control light power to alter the PCs' illumination toward shadowy-light conditions, where he is the most powerful. This changes the effective illumination of the light source by one of the above categories (e.g., bright light becomes average light, average light becomes twilight, etc.). As soon as this happens, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

> As you step into the colonnade, your sources of light flicker and dim. A voice from the shadows of the colonnade to your left breaks the quiet crackling of blue flame in the fiery pit.
>
> "You are intruding on my privacy," the flat, cold voice whispers. "Go away. Only death and madness await you here."

If the PCs attempt to parley, Mishcaron continues to hide in the shadows and talk for a round or two. If the PCs ask, he admits to having a *planar amulet* but is unwilling to loan it unless a party member challenges the Shadowmaster to personal combat in exchange for the amulet (the PC must agree to surrender a magical item of his own if he loses). During the contest, if his opponent appears too strong, the Baron yields after a round or two of combat and retrieves the amulet from area H12. As soon as it is in the hands of the PCs, he orders the six shadows with him to attack the entire party and fight them to the death (see "Random Encounters" sidebar for shadow statistics).

Under no circumstances will Mishcaron allow the characters to approach the octagonal door in the west of the chamber. Although he has never been able to pierce the door's defenses, he knows all too well from his years of service to the Mystics that the portal leads to the Froygan Rectifier (which controls the illumination of the entire city). If the PCs try to get closer to the octagonal portal, the Baron orders his six shadows to attack while he casts his throwing stars at spell-casting members of the party, using ballistic attack if necessary.

Should he be wounded for 15 or more hp damage, Mishcaron *shadow-walks* to the plane of Shadow and waits for the outcome of the PCs' battle with his undead shadows, all the while regener-

ating 1 hp per turn. If the battle appears to be winding down quickly, he uses cell adjustment to heal himself, then *shadow-walks* back to the colonnade and attempts to attack by surprise. This time he draws 2-5 *shadow images* about himself for distraction and fights until taking up to 35 hp damage before again retreating by *shadow-walking*. He then retreats to area H12 to recuperate and wait for the PCs.

Anyone attempting to open the north set of doors will be buried under a shower of rubble. The character opening the doors must save vs. breath weapon or be completely covered under the avalanche of stone, taking 4-16 hp damage (half if the save is made). A buried character is immobilized and will suffocate in a number of rounds equal to his constitution score divided by three (round up). It will take a total of 3-18 rounds, divided by the number of characters digging, to excavate a buried comrade.

After the Shadowmaster has either been defeated or forced to retreat for a second time, the three statues left standing in the room will start to glow. The patron deities of Topaline, having witnessed the defeat of their temple's desecrator, have decided to reward the party for their efforts. If a wizard either touches or takes some time to meditate before the statue of the young man (representing Gorn, the Mystic deity of knowledge), his intelligence will be increased by 1. If a warrior either touches or meditates before the statue of the victorious fighter (representing Mintar, the Mystic deity of honor), his strength will be increased by 1. If a priest either touches or meditates before the statue of the blind woman (representing Rujsha, the Mystic deity of justice and creation), his wisdom will be increased by 1. These increases are permanent, but a character may be so favored by the Mystic gods only once.

The pit of blue fire in the center of the room represents the eternal presence of the Mystic gods in the temple and in the city as well. Although Mishcaron was able to topple the icons of the other five Mystic deities, the presence of Topaline's divine patrons remained too strong for him to budge the other three statues. Anyone foolish enough to touch the blue flame will be burned for 3-18 hp damage and permanently struck blind (removable by only a *cure blindness* spell cast by a 12th-or higher-level priest).

Other than the favors of the pleased Mystic gods, there is no treasure to be found in this chamber.

H10. The Rectifier. The octagonal door leading into this chamber was empowered by the Mystics and set as a guardian for the Froygan Rectifier. The portal has 200 PSPs (granted by the gods) and a power score of 16. Its powers include mindlink and domination. If approached within 3′ by someone not bearing the key from area H8, it telepathically warns the person that he is not allowed access to the Rectifier. If its warning is not heeded, the door uses domination to foil the PC's attempts to open it. (Should a thief try to pick the lock, the door attempts to dominate the rogue and have him break all of his thieving picks and tools; if a wizard attempts to cast a spell at the door, it attempts to dominate the mage and have him cast the spell on another door, etc.) A saving throw vs. spells successfully thwarts the attempt at domination. The door is wrought iron and physically impossible to budge. The door cannot be broken down by any means. The key from area H8 slides easily into the lock, and it opens with an audible click.

> Once unlocked, the iron portal swings open into a dark octagonal chamber similar in size to the temple to your rear. At its center, a 30′-diameter octagonal pillar rises up into the vast darkness above you. A narrow flight of stairs wraps around the outside of the pillar. The stairs, too, disappear into the darkness above.

PCs who mount the stairs climb 50′ to a 30′-diameter octagonal platform with no railing. At the center of the platform rests an opalescent orb embedded in a stone pedestal. PCs who received a vision at either Gorn's chapel or the Seeing Pool will recognize this place at once from their waking dream.

The orb, a perfect sphere of the mineral topaline, is the Froygan Rectifier. Formed by the Mystic Froygan over three centuries ago, the Rectifier converts PSPs into warmth and illumination for the city. If a character with greater than 10 PSPs touches the orb, the Rectifier initiates telepathic contact and says in an emotionless voice: "State desired function." The Rectifier will state its two functions if requested, but if prompted to perform an action other than heating or lighting, it replies with: "Command invalid. State desired function." If requested to provide heat or light, the orb asks the user to specify the magnitude of the temperature or illumination change. The Rectifier can change the temperature from 50°F (the standard local temperature) to 60°F, 70°F, or 80°F. It can also increase the illumination from no lighting up to bright conditions (see the description of Baron Mishcaron at area H9 for details on the six basic illumination levels).

Each change in heat or lighting condition requires the expenditure of 10 PSPs. If the PC's demands are too high for his current psionic strength, the Rectifier drains all the PC's available PSPs and tries to provide as much heat or illumination as possible. PSPs invested in the orb are cumulative. For instance, if a character with 26 PSPs asks for bright light, the Rectifier attempts to draw off 40 PSPs (shifting night/dark conditions to shadowy light, then twilight, then average light, then bright). Since the character has only 26, the orb drains the character of his entire psionic strength but, in the process, improves the illumination from night/dark to twilight. Another psionically endowed PC could then touch the orb and contribute the remaining 14 PSPs needed to provide bright lighting.

The Rectifier amplifies and channels psychic energy to both the entire Temple complex and the topaline pyramid built over the city. Since the Mystics built this city on a sunless world (the only place where the mineral topaline could be found), they needed to devise a way to provide heat and illumination for the town's inhabitants. The Rectifier and the pyramid shell—shaped in the form of a naturally occurring topaline crystal—were created to fulfil that need. Each morning, Mystics would channel 70 PSPs into the Rectifier to create an artificial sunrise. Since the power dissipates at a rate of five points an hour, several Mystics were charged with the duty of diverting power to the orb during the "day" cycle, and the Rectifier was allowed to dissipate its energy during the 14-hour "night" cycle (Topaline thus had a 28-hour "day," with the overhead light dimming through five stages of illumination and four stages of heat over the last 14 hours). The orb

cannot be removed from its pedestal without breakage.

While they are channeling psychic energy into the Rectifier, the PCs will note that the room is getting brighter (and warmer, too, if the PCs care to expend the strength). Indeed, the entire temple complex and city is getting brighter, but the party won't be able to tell that until they leave the room.

H11. Collapsed Temple Entrance. In order to preserve his privacy, Mishcaron collapsed the main entrance to the temple using his detonate power. The wraith Ashzar (see "Random Monster Encounters in Topaline" for statistics) has made the rubble in this hallway into its lair. Once an evil noble who was murdered by his bodyguards as the city was being abandoned, Ashzar regards the city as its grave and hates to see anyone "disturb" it. It works with no other being, bitterly hating everything it sees—especially the living.

The stairs leading down from the plaza (area D) must have once been covered with paintings and frescoes, but all traces of those have been scratched away. If forced to retreat from an encounter in the plaza, Ashzar will lurk in the rubble near the collapsed entrance and attempt to surprise any PCs poking about the fallen chunks of stone and masonry. The wraith will fight to the death once engaged in combat in its lair.

If the PCs sift through the rubble after they have dispatched or turned Ashzar, they discover a nest containing a large pile of 5,325 sp. The PCs have a 1-in-6 chance (cumulative) of discovering the rest of the wraith's treasure mixed in with the silver: a leather pouch containing a 500-gp emerald and a 1,000-gp diamond.

H12. Temple Workshop. If the Mystics did all of their research in the library (area E), it was here that they built their inventions. Twelve marble worktables are arrayed symmetrically around the chamber, with work stools neatly pushed underneath as if the Mystics stopped working here only yesterday, not three centuries ago. A forge squats in the center of the room, and three closed cabinets sit against the north, south, and east walls.

If Mishcaron was not slain during his first two encounters with the PCs in area H9, he retreats here after healing himself and uses his metamorphosis power to change his form into that of an innocuous work stool, similar to the several dozen others pushed under the tables. Mishcaron will be severely handicapped by any improvement of lighting conditions, as outlined in area H9, but he can use his psionic powers in his new form.

As soon as the PCs enter the chamber, Mishcaron detonates the floor at the center of the party. This inflicts 1-10 hp damage on all within a 10′ radius of the blast (save vs. breath weapon for half damage). After the explosion, the PCs will notice a 3′ hole in the floor.

The Baron then returns to his normal form and attacks in the confusion following the blast, gaining a +1 bonus to surprise. Even though he may be weakened by strong light, he will fight to the death to protect his sanctuary and home. The DM should make the best use of his remaining abilities, as this will be his last stand.

After the battle, the PCs will have time to explore the workshop at their leisure. The forge is a topaline furnace, specially created by the Mystics to heat steel quickly and uniformly to well over the 1,334°F needed for tempering. Each PSP channeled to the forge results in an increase of 10°F inside the furnace. The magical blade Render (see area B6) and Mishcaron's staff were both forged here centuries ago. Because of the uniformity of the heat provided by the Mystic furnace, armor and weapons are much easier to forge here and are always of enchantable quality. A skilled weaponsmith or armorer might be able to produce inherently magical +1 weapon or armor here, provided he used the finest steel and made his smithy ability check by six more than needed.

The north cabinet is unlocked and contains smithy tools and raw materials. There are enough tools to equip a dozen smiths and artisans. The bottom half of the cabinet is stacked with ingots of various metals (each ingot weighs 1 lb., the equivalent of 10 coins). There are 300 ingots of silver, 226 ingots of gold, 180 ingots of steel (worth their weight in electrum), and 10 ingots of a silvery metal as hard as steel (this is mithril, and it is worth its weight in platinum). Two ingots of steel are enough to forge a dagger blade, while 10 are needed to make a sword blade.

The eastern cabinet is unlocked and contains weapons of all shapes and sizes, many of them alien and bizarre to the PCs. There are two long swords, four chains, 10 throwing daggers, 33 shuriken, four sai, two sets of nunchaku, four mithril-wire garrotes, and an assortment of other items. There is a 10% chance that any item is of such fine quality that it is actually a +1 weapon. It might be helpful for the DM to refer to the *Complete Fighter's Handbook* or *Oriental Adventures* weapon lists for detailed descriptions of the exotic weapons discovered here, or the DM can invent his own items.

The cabinet along the south wall is filled with scrolls and documents recording the development of many Mystic inventions like the Froygan Rectifier, the topaline forge, and the *planar amulets.* There are even design specifications and diagrams of what a *planar amulet* looks like. Mixed in with all of these papers is a scroll inscribed with five spells at the 12th level of experience: *ventriloquism, darkness 15′ radius, phantom steed, massmorph,* and *Mordenkainen's faithful hound.* In a small box hidden behind all the documents, the PCs can discover an *amulet of the planes* and a *ring of truth.* If the former item is compared with the *planar amulet*'s design specifications, the PCs can see that they correspond exactly.

Leaving Topaline

Getting back to Silver Rise shouldn't be taken for granted, especially if the party gained access to the temple complex thanks to the aid of Nightshade (this is quite likely). If the party uses the Rectifier to light up the city, the wizard will round up as many of her three ogre skeletons as are still standing and investigate the temple.

When she finds the PCs again, Nightshade congratulates them on the fine job they've done and, in her polite, demure way, requests that the PCs let her keep a "fair" share of the gold, silver, and steel discovered in area H12. She doesn't want to kill the PCs (after all, they did manage to deal with the Baron), but if they insult her by not compensating her for her aid, she gets nasty very quickly. Regardless of what is actually negotiated about the treasure in area H12, Nightshade makes plans to ambush the party later and slay them all if they disturbed her personal treasure cache in area H3.

Having dealt with Nightshade, the

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party will be relieved to discover that they do not have to worry about shadows so long as the upper city remains illuminated (but remember that the Rectifier dissipates five PSPs per hour, so it might be getting dark by the time the PCs emerge from the temple complex). If the PCs neglected to light up the city, they may have to fight shadows on their way to the city gates unless they have a strong source of illumination. The party should have no trouble at the city gates, which are designed to keep people from getting in, not out.

Concluding the Adventure

The party will have to brave the Void one more time before returning. Read or paraphrase the following to the players when their PCs enter the *gate:*

> Clenching your teeth against the expected cold of the Void, you step once again into the glittering veil. With quick steps you traverse the seemingly vast, numbing expanse of nothingness to a small rectangle of light nearby. You push through the curtain of light and find yourself standing in the middle of a bonfire-lit battle between Dame Moore, six men-at-arms, and some shadowy figures in the glade surrounding the Travel Stone outside Silver Rise. It is still nighttime. Just as you arrive, Dame Moore's silvery *spiritual hammer* fades away, leaving her defenseless.

No matter how long the PCs spent in Topaline, only four hours has passed since they left their own world. When the PCs arrive, Dame Moore and what is left of the town guard (the rest fled) are fighting a losing battle with a group of five **shadows** (hp 21, 17, 15, 12, 11; see "Random Monster Encounters in Topaline" sidebar for complete statistics). These shadows, like others encountered in the course of the adventure, will fight to the death.

Other than Dame Moore's (spent) *spiritual hammer,* neither she nor any of the town guards have any magical weapons that can harm the shadows, unless thoughtful PCs gave them some. She has not yet attempted to turn the undead, saving this as a last resort, since it will send the shadows into the woods to later prey on her townspeople.

While five shadows might not pose much of a threat for the party at full strength, after the PCs' ordeals in Topaline they might be seriously weakened, so that this final battle might not be an easy romp. Dame Moore will provide what help she can by starting a *chant.* Once the shadows have been dealt with, the party is in a position to close the *gate* by touching the Travel Stone with the *amulet of the planes* obtained in area H12.

Ask each of the PCs where they want to be standing when contact between the magical devices takes place (Dame Moore and the town guard will retreat 60'). Clever PCs might attempt to toss the amulet at the Stone rather than touching it to the Stone manually. In either case, the result is the same.

> When the amulet nears the Travel Stone, its silver-white glow flashes as a yellow spark arcs from the amulet to the Stone's surface. During that same instant, the shimmering opalescent *gate* collapses into a glowing line segment suspended in the air. A heartbeat later, the line collapses to a pinpoint and explodes in a burst of silvery light, sending chunks of the demolished Travel Stone flying in all directions.

Everyone in a 20' radius of the Stone when it explodes takes 2-20 hp damage from flying debris (save vs. paralyzation for half damage). The amulet must make a saving throw vs. disintegration (as metal +5) in order to survive the explosion, which resulted from the instantaneous discharge of the Stone's psychic energy. If the amulet fails its saving throw, PCs may later discover it as a black melted lump in the scattered debris of the Stone. Whether or not the amulet is destroyed, the entire party should share in a 6,000 XP award for using it to destroy the *gate* threatening Silver Rise.

Further Adventures

Those who survive the final battle with the shadows and the Stone's explosion are treated as heroes in Silver Rise. The townspeople throw a feast in their honor, effectively bringing the adventure to a close. Depending on the DM's desires, the adventure could have lasting ramifications on the campaign or could provide a recurring enigma that the PCs might not decide to tackle until they are of higher level. Just who were the Mystics, and where did they go? Are there any more Travel Stones in existence, or was this the last? If there are more Stones, where do they lead? The answers to these questions might lie in the papers taken from the temple workshop, or they may need to be hunted down elsewhere.

Nightshade might make another appearance later in the adventurers' careers as a shade, or the PCs might seek her out for her knowledge on other matters. She might have gained full control over the inhabitants and remains of the sunless city by then. A party in a SPELLJAMMER™ campaign might discover her dark world somewhere in an unexplored crystal sphere.

And, finally, what about psionics in the campaign? Those adventurers who did not gain permanent powers from area F (as well as Ardy and Dame Moore) will lose their wild powers after 5-30 days. However, the DM might elect to have the destruction of the *gate* make the wild powers permanent. The wild powers granted to the characters by the Travel Stone should not greatly unbalance the game and are fairly easy to play. This allows for further experimentation with the AD&D 2nd Edition psionics system and adds a new dimension to both the characters and the game campaign. Ω

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BY WILLIE WALSH

A city can come back from the grave, too.

Artwork by David O. Miller

Willie says, "I first got bitten by the module-writing bug after reading 'The Ruins of Andril' in an old issue of DRAGON® Magazine. Now, years later, it's my turn to write a desert scenario. I hope it lives up to the original inspiration."

"Telar in Norbia" is an AD&D® 2nd Edition adventure designed for a well-equipped party of player characters, level 6-8. Six such characters (about 42 total levels) with +1 or better weapons appropriate to their class and one or two magical items each should prove successful. At least one +2 weapon should also be available. The inclusion of a priest and a mage would be a distinct advantage. A balanced mix of races and classes is advised, with alignments that tend toward good.

Copies of the 2nd Edition *Legends & Lore* and 1st Edition *Wilderness Survival Guide* might be helpful to the referee, but the module can be played without them. The adventure may occur as an isolated event or, if the DM wishes, as a part of a larger campaign setting.

Adventure Background

Long ago, the cities of Sepron and Telar were twin jewels in the sandy wastes of Norbia. Their marbled buildings with many fountains were a balm to weary travelers and merchants under the searing heat of the desert sun.

Sepron was known as the City of Silk. Camels laden with the precious cloth came the long haul across the sands to trade for the rough gemstones mined from the hills surrounding the oasis. The city's wide streets teemed with white-robed men of the desert, dark-skinned princes from mysterious jungles to the east, leather-clad horsemen from the far-off plains, engineers and architects from many nations, and priests, wizards, and restless adventurers from beyond the fringes of detailed maps.

Telar, her sister city, was the City of the Onyx Gates, where precious crystals of red and green glowed strangely in the light of evening. Ivory and skins, slaves, rare meats of shy desert creatures, fine cloth, and sturdy oxen were the treasures that caravans floundered through pathless dunes or scaled precipitous heights to buy with yellow gold.

For centuries, the cities prospered and grew. Then, with frightening suddenness, they both disappeared beneath a

storm of drifting sands. The fountains and paved streets, the slender pillars and mighty gates, the domed temples and secret counting-houses alike—all vanished from the knowledge of men. Caravans went elsewhere and other towns prospered, so that Sepron and Telar became fabled in the tales of ignorant desert nomads but remained all but forgotten in the wider world.

For the Dungeon Master

It has been 300 years since the twin cities vanished, but fate now decrees that Telar should once more play a part in the workings of the world.

Many years after the cities' founding, the two had developed distinct and separate cultures based mainly, but not exclusively, on the religious persuasions of their citizens. The citizens of Sepron worshiped the deity Qeb (see *Legends & Lore,* page 93). The Telari sought the favor of Set (*LL,* page 97), sacrificing their hard-won wealth in the creation of terrible shrines to their evil god.

For a time all went well, and only the ill-favored dispositions of the priests who paraded the streets of Telar were remarked upon by the travelers who passed the onyx-studded gates to the city. But as time went on, it was noted that more strangers entered that city than returned, while religious rites became more frequent. Trade decreased as nervous caravan masters avoided Telar, seeking out instead the peaceful Sepron in the sandy wastes.

Despite its self-wrought problems, Telar perceived Sepron as a usurper of Telar's merchants and buyers. A proclamation was made, demanding that one-fifth of all profits made in the City of Silk be turned over to the priests of Set in Telar as compensation for Sepron's "underhanded dealings." The people of Sepron refused this unjust demand, and Telar promptly broke off contact with her one-time sister, distancing herself further from the outside world.

For three years, peace reigned in Sepron. Then its people awoke one morning to find the dunes outside cluttered with the tents of an army from Telar. The siege was long and bitter, but the slave-built army of Telar seemed unsure of its tactics. Finally, Sepron prevailed and scattered Telar's slaves, taking many prisoners and much gear of war. Many of the prisoners were tainted as if by some evil blight, and most died of strange causes over a period of weeks.

The City of the Onyx Gates refused to acknowledge defeat or to pay reparations, as it was obliged to do. Therefore Sepron, in time, gathered her allies and set out with a great force to subdue the remnants of the Telari army.

But the pride of Telar was great, and its people were bitter in the face of defeat. With their walls crumbling and the proud, city gates battered down by magic, the priests of Set summoned a host of creatures from the elemental planes to slay their foes and annihilate their city. The Sepronites retaliated with their own summonings until huge windstorms obscured the battlefield, blinding foes and confusing the lines. Supernatural beings fought one another in the press, covering sections of the armies in fire and windblown sand. A week passed before the maelstrom finally died away, and when the first tentative caravan of spring came seeking the cities of Sepron and Telar, they found only a sandy waste where once the marbled buildings had stood. Both had been lost in the final confrontation.

Today, only the hardy nomads remember the tale of the sister cities, teaching it to their children as a lesson in the folly of pride. One of these tribes lives near the site that tradition ascribes to Old Sepron, and so they call themselves the Sephrani. It is the everyday activities of the Sephrani that threaten to bring to light the old evil of Telar once more.

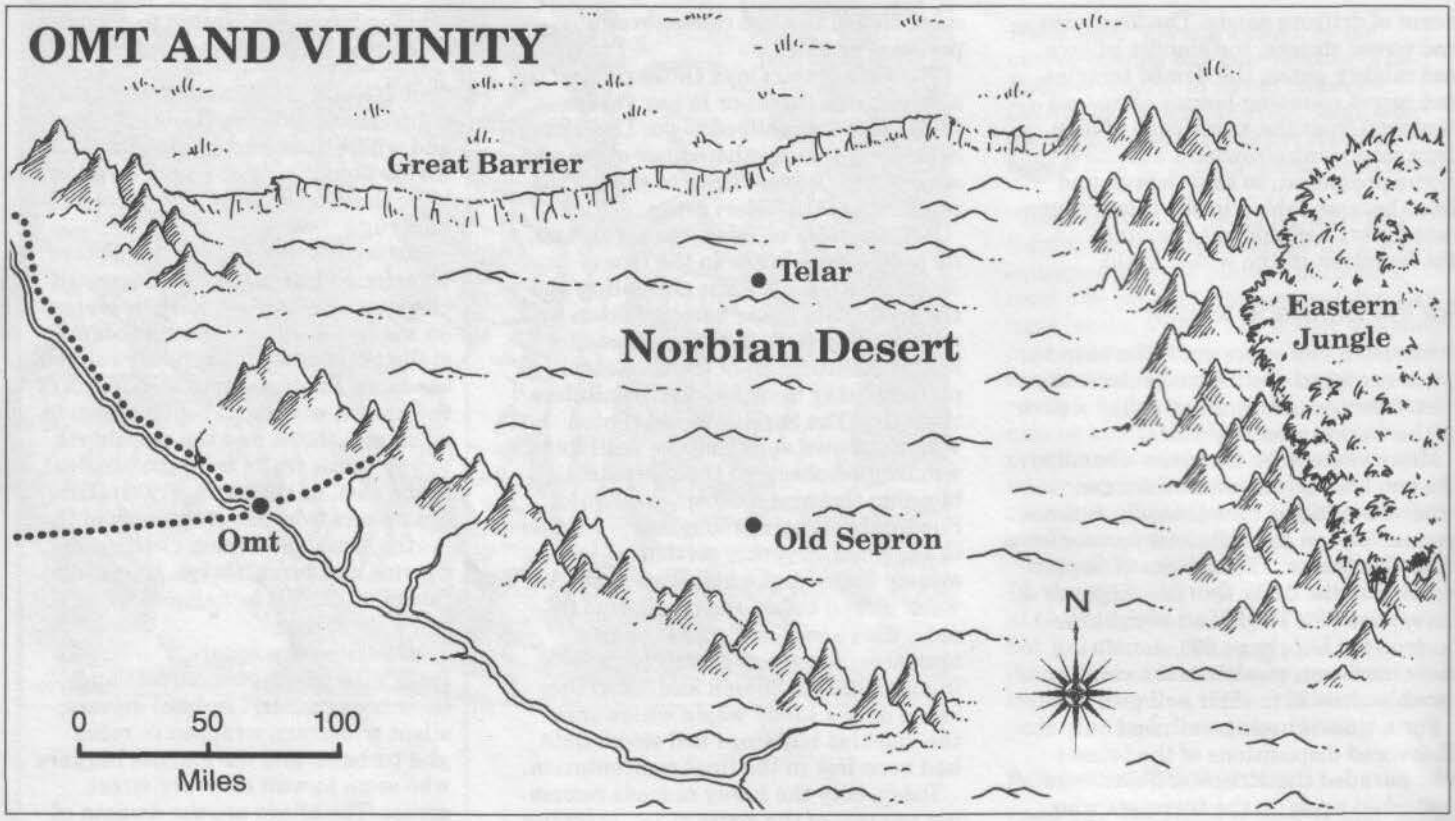
In the City of Omt

At the start of this adventure, it's assumed the player characters are all together, or at least within easy reach of one another—possibly in the same city or large town. If the DM wishes to draw out the scenario further, Sephrani messengers, seeking to hire adventurers, may have to cross a great deal of territory to reach the PCs, making the return journey a matter of weeks or months, with other adventures suggested along the way.

For convenience's sake, the PCs can begin in the city of Omt, some way west of the Norbian Desert but close enough to allow a reasonably short trip to the territory of the Sephrani. If the DM wants to detail this city for later use, he may do so, but only a brief outline is given here. Read or paraphrase the following boxed description to get the PCs started on this adventure.

> Omt is a city of red sandstone, where palm trees shade the streets by day and where most people spend their nights atop their flat-roofed dwellings, sleeping on reed mats or camel-hair rugs.
>
> During the day, the central square transforms into a scene of organized chaos as hawkers set up their wares on the paved square or on wooden stalls overhung with brightly colored canopies. Products from all corners of the known world and beyond seem to be on sale there, and the crowds vie to buy exotic fruits from the jungles of the east, or the strangely crafted ornaments from the plainsmen of the north. Arms and armor, cloth, charms and cures, slaves, spices, and fine silks can all be haggled for in the wide bazaar.
>
> Away from the square, the streets teem with passing merchants and their bodyguards, elephant drivers, silent tribesmen wrapped in robes and turbans, and the endless beggars who seem to wait on every street corner. The alleys are the domain of thieves and cutthroats, preying on careless strangers and the weak.
>
> Accommodations are easily found, with inns and hostelries aplenty to cater to the city's many visitors. Your party is staying at the Moonflower Inn, quite a high-class establishment by city standards. Most comforts available for a price in Omt can be purchased through the landlord, Al-Kadar, so only the wealthiest adventurers or merchants choose to stay here.
>
> One morning, while on your way down to breakfast, you find Al-Kadar wringing his hands at the foot of the stairs. He tells you that a group of men are waiting to speak with you in the alley by the back door.

If the PCs check out their visitors, they discover three desert-robed tribesmen waiting patiently in the alleyway behind the inn. The threesome are Sephrani warriors, sent to hire suitable adventurers on behalf of their chieftain, Abu Nec-Adran. As word has gotten around about the PCs' obvious experience, they have come here seeking to hire them.



The tribesmen are visibly armed with scimitars, and their robes conceal an assortment of deadly throwing knives. Their leader, named Sirinon, bows politely to the PCs. He is quite content to conduct his interview in the alley, under the open sky, but appreciates the gesture if the adventurers think to ask the trio indoors as their guests (Al-Kadar will be most discomfited at the thought of lowly tribesmen on his premises, but remains silent).

On Losing a Princess

The oasis at Old Sepron is tightly controlled by the Sephrani. However, another tribe—the Jaloni—have been pressuring the Sephrani to relinquish their water rights, something the tribe is naturally loath to do.

Rather than start an open conflict, Abu Nec-Adran, leader of the Sephrani, has planned to defuse the situation while also gaining further prestige among the other tribes in the region. He has cleverly arranged shared water rights with the Jaloni, sealing the agreement by agreeing to a marriage between the Amir Elka Runa of the Jaloni and Abu Nec-Adran's eldest daughter, Princess Avona.

The princess was informed of her imminent marriage to the amir and was suitably escorted by eunuchs and guardsmen into the desert, bearing many gifts and a fair dowry. That was two weeks ago, and nothing has been heard from the party since then.

As the Sephrani cannot provoke bloodshed by sending armed warriors toward Jaloni territory, they have decided to ask the PCs to investigate the disappearance of Princess Avona. Sirinon tells the PCs that they have one hour in which to make up their minds, as he has other groups of adventurers to see if they decline. If the PCs accept this honorable commission, the trio of Sephrani will escort them to the oasis at Old Sepron, where their chieftain will arrange terms of employment and reward.

Sirinon, Sephrani warrior: AL LN; AC 8; MV 12; F3; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; S 17, D 16, C 15, I 13, W 10, Ch 15; scimitar.

Sephrani warriors (2): AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; F1; hp 9; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; abilities unremarkable.

The landlord, Al-Kadar, can tell the adventurers that the Sephrani are a powerful tribe of nomads who ply the Desert of Norbia with their camels and goats. They control one of the important oases there, at a place called Old Sepron. The Sephrani are honorable but fierce warriors, and if they seek outsiders to help them with some problem, they must really be in dire need.

Al-Kadar, Innkeeper: AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 8; dagger.

One Hump, or Two?

Assuming the PCs accept the task of finding the princess, they must provide themselves with transport—some dromedary (one-humped) camels (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* page 123). Each PC should buy two camels: one to carry gear and the other as a mount. Camels can be bought in Omt at regular *Player's Handbook* prices. The Sephrani will assist in the purchase, if asked, by pointing out the best animals to buy and giving advice on how to manage them. They will also remind the PCs that they will be traveling through the desert only by night, to avoid heat inju-

ries. The Sephrani will accompany them the entire way to Old Sepron.

Any PC with the animal-handling proficiency can control the camels if he makes his die roll. Otherwise, all PCs have a 20% chance to keep the beasts headed in the right direction and at the proper speed. Anyone failing this check by rolling 100% has angered his camel and becomes the target of a spitting attack. A bite or two may follow, at the DM's discretion.

Camels: INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 21; HD 3; hp 18; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA spitting (25% chance of being blinded for 1-3 rounds); SZ L; ML 3; MC (Animal, Herd).

Journey and Arrival

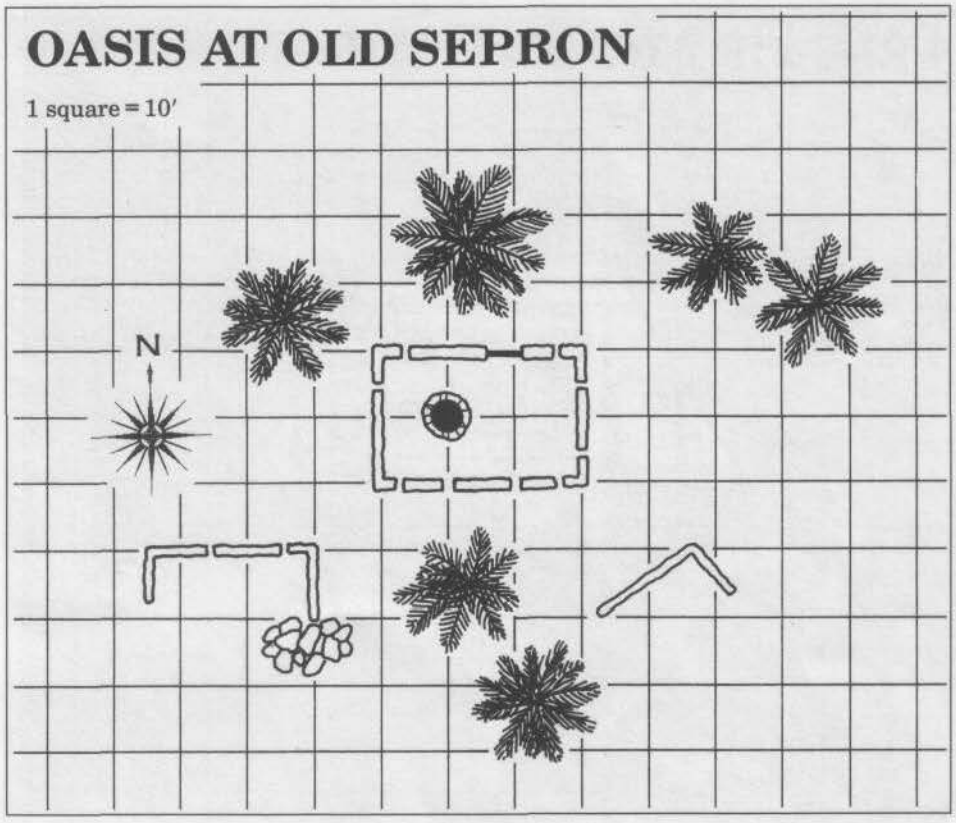
The trip to Old Sepron should be completed without any encounters, as the Sephrani guide the adventurers there faultlessly. The only problems the PCs may encounter will be with their own malicious camels and the heat of the desert.

Much of the Desert of Norbia is made up of sandy dunes, with areas closest to the mountains covered with long stretches of broken rock. Temperatures can, in extreme conditions, rise as high as 134°F (58°C) during the day, or fall as low as 38°F (4°C) at night. Generally, the temperature at noon hovers around 86°F (30°C), which is still quite hot enough to roast the adventurers.

Traveling by day is dangerous. Anyone not dressed in the all-covering robes of the Sephrani is likely to begin cooking as the day goes on. Metal armor gets too hot to touch and should be wrapped up and stowed away on one of the pack animals. Details on the effects of heat are available in the *Wilderness Survival Guide,* pages 18-21.

Journeying on camelback, the group takes 9½ days to trek the 200 miles from Omt to Old Sepron, across the low mountains (which have trails) and sandy desert beyond (which have no trails). This assumes normal 10-hour journeys of 21 miles per day, and no camel unreasonably burdened (see the *DMG,* pages 124-125). Encumbering their mounts doubles the PCs' traveling time. All traveling should be done by night; the Sephrani refuse to travel by day.

Old Sepron today is little more than a cluster of date palms in an otherwise barren waste. Remnants of brick houses



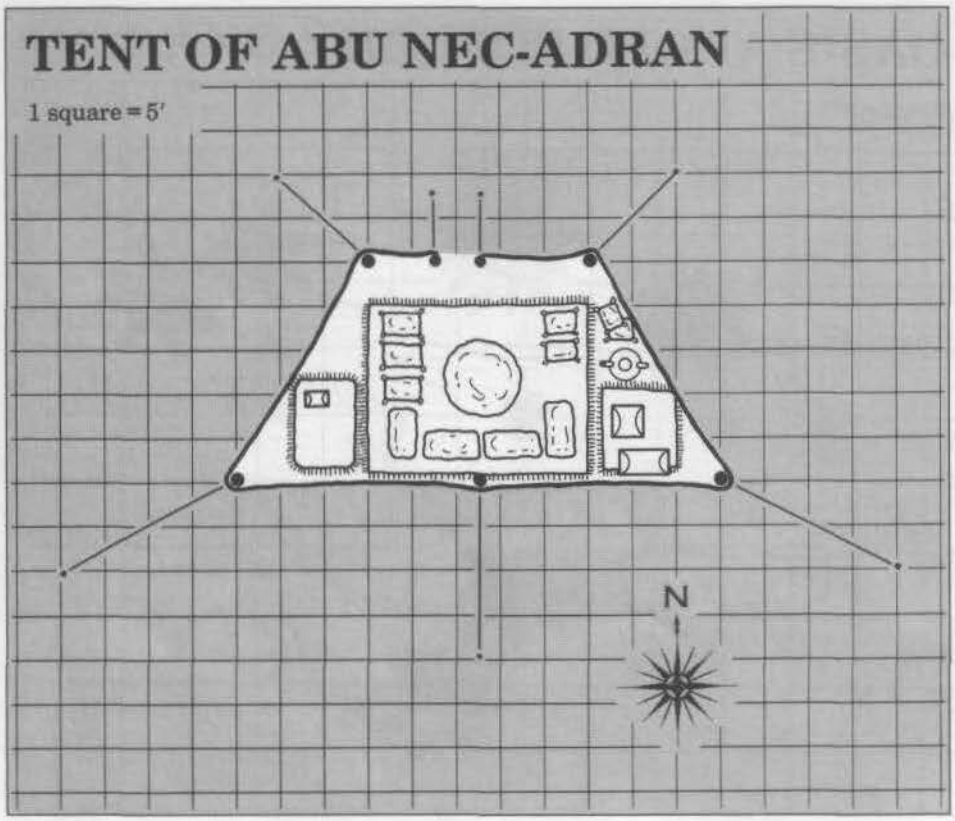
peer out of the sands, with tents pitched between or within them. A now-roofless barracks, pierced with slits for archers to shoot through, marks the location of the well from which the tribe or their friends may draw water. The floor of this building is choked with sand, but the stone cover over the well prevents it from becoming blocked, too. Other oases exist in isolated areas of the Desert of Norbia, but only this particular one is marked on the map. The DM may site other areas as he wishes.

Once at the oasis, the PCs are offered a tent in which to rest. The Sephrani chieftain, Abu-Nec Adran, is camped nearby. The PCs see only a few tribesmen around the ruins, though there are 43 **Sephrani warriors** (with the same statistics as the two warriors who traveled with Sirinon) and 12 **Sephrani elders** (AC 10; statistics unremarkable; otherwise the same statistics as Sirion) present. By long habit, Sephrani like to stay hidden whenever possible, to avoid letting their enemies count their true numbers. All tribesmen use scimitars, daggers, and darts in combat. Also present are 131 **noncombatants** — women, children, and injured or elderly men (0-level humans; hp 1-4; otherwise as per Sephrani warriors). Also by tradition, only male Sephrani fight, though women will fight fiercely with daggers if they or the children are threatened. The tribe has 56 **camels** hidden within the ruins (same statistics as for the PCs' camels). Not present at the camp are the three tribal clerics and 10 more warriors, who are off visiting other tribal oases for the next three weeks; their statistics may be invented by the DM as he likes.

The Tent of Abu-Nec Adran

This tent is a single enclosure, with a narrow opening to the north. Inside, the floor is covered with a large groundsheet covered with luxurious rugs of Sephrani design. The rugs are worth 100-600 gp, but are *not* for sale! Pillows and cushions replace chairs, with particularly plush ones for the chieftain, whose place is the seating area to the south.

On his left, Abu-Nec Adran keeps a small box containing writing implements and some blank pieces of parchment. On his right, two large treasure chests contain up to 10,000 gp worth of



assorted coinage, jewels, gems, and tribal heirlooms. Anyone who touches this treasure without the express approval of Abu Nec-Adran is subject to death at the hands of Blog and Nefk, his ogre bodyguards, both raised by the tribe since infancy to become loyal and generally peaceful tribal members.

Beside the chests is a large kettle where tea brews to a consistency only a bit more liquid than tar. It's traditional to offer visitors three consecutive cups of tea, each a little stronger and sweeter than the previous one. Refusal to drink the tea is a serious breach of tribal etiquette.

The chieftain awaits the PCs in his tent, where he reiterates his messengers' promises of reward for the rescue of the princess. (He doesn't speculate on her condition; if asked, he agrees the body should be returned if she's discovered dead.) On top of the great honor of the PCs being made friends of the Sephrani if they recover her (alive or dead), he offers the fee of 2,000 gp. The PCs can haggle to increase their fee (up to 3,000 gp total), since the Sephrani are not adversely disposed to bargaining in their everyday lives. Though he has not thought much about a time limit, the chieftain feels that two weeks of careful searching in the northern wastes is sufficient. If the PCs have not found the princess at that time, only one-fifth of the promised reward will be offered as payment for trying.

To assist the PCs' journey into the trackless sands to the north, Abu-Nec Adran will give one of the PC clerics (whomever is the most polite or most powerful in appearance) a clerical scroll with three *divination* spells upon it, cast at the 8th level of ability. These can be used to get better directions if the PCs believe they are lost after a few days of travel.

Abu-Nec Adran is honorable but practical. He won't be offended if someone speculates that the princess may have eloped with someone other than the amir. He knows she was pleased by the match, as she knew Elka-Runa was a handsome and dashing prince, so he can discount any other speculation without apparent embarrassment.

The chieftain also casually mentions that he would like the PCs to recover a "worthless trinket, but of great historical value" that Princess Avona wore around her neck. In reality, this necklace of beaten gold discs is part of the princess's dowry and worth 1,500 gp, though he will never mention its value.

Abu-Nec Adran, Sephrani chieftain: AL LN; AC 7; MV 12; F5; hp 31; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 17; S 18/31, D 17, C 13, I 13, W 18, Ch 16; specialized with scimitar; scimitar, two daggers, four darts.

Blog and **Nefk,** ogre bodyguards: AL CN; AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1; hp 22, 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA +2 to damage; SZ L; ML 12; XP 175; MC (Ogre). The chieftain keeps these two as exotic "pets," to impress visiting tribesmen and others (like the PCs).

Loose in the Desert

The princess and her escort left the oasis heading north. Territory belonging to the tribe stretches for only five miles north of this point, then the desert is a no-man's land of dunes and an occasional rock. Because Sephrani warriors cannot risk accompanying the adventurers, the PCs will have to negotiate this wilderness on their own. The PCs are given very careful guidance by the tribesmen using star positions to avoid becoming lost while traveling at night; allow for a 40% chance of getting lost per evening of travel (100% if traveling in daytime), minus the intelligence score of the party leader or navigator. The Random Encounters table (see sidebar) may be used to determine who or what the PCs encounter along the way. Roll for an encounter at noon, dusk, and dawn. An encounter is indicated on a roll of 1 on 1d6. Roll 1d8 to see what is encountered or choose as desired.

The Ruins of Telar

The PCs travel four days north (about 80 miles, if they are traveling at 21 miles per day over the sands on camelback and have not become lost) before they come to anything that looks like it may have something to do with the Princess Avona. Up ahead is a large piece of canvas covered with a coating of windblown sand. To the left is what appears to be some kind of a building.

1. The Gates of the City.

Some way to the west, you catch sight of a regular construction in the sandy wastes. A building, or perhaps the ruin of some lost shrine, stares out bleakly above a dune on the horizon. Your climb to the top of the farthest dune reveals a surprising view. What you mistook from a distance to be a squat house is really a pair of 50′-tall gate towers. All around their base are the ruined gear and sand-pitted bones of scores of warriors. It seems the fickle wind has uncovered some ancient, forgotten battlefield at the entrance of a sand-shrouded city.

Lying among the ancient bones are the bodies of four of the princess's Sephrani bodyguards, covered with a light coating of sand. They've been dead about 10 days, judging from the condition of the bodies and the amount of sand on them. They died from sword cuts, and each had his weapon drawn. If questioned by *speak with dead* spells, the guards remember being attacked by unarmored warriors (some of the human-form minions of Set from area 9C, though the guards don't know that).

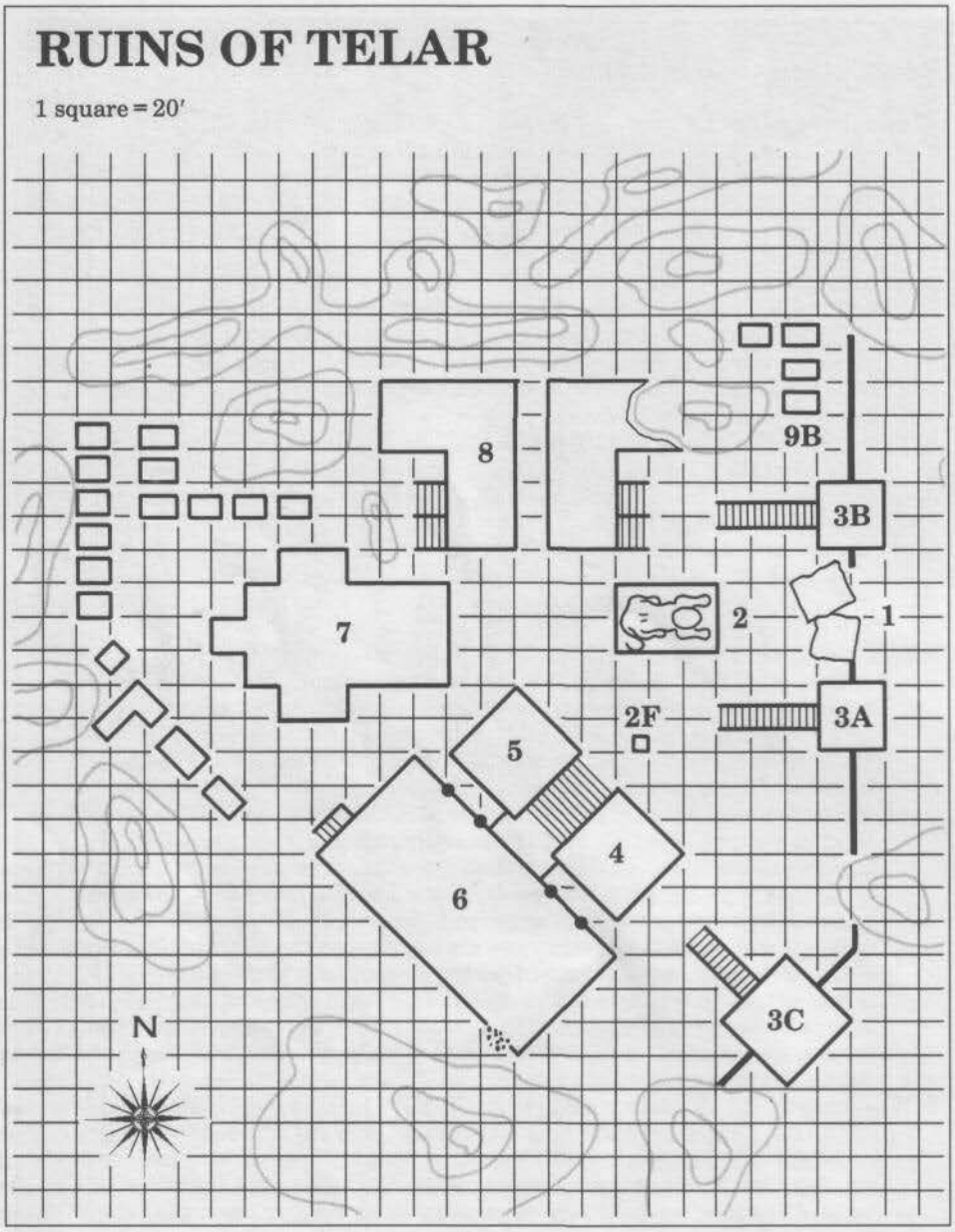
Princess Avona's party was passing along this route when it was halted by a sandstorm. In the morning, the scouts reported a strange sight: the winds had uncovered the ruins of a hitherto unknown city. Excited by the prospect of exploring the ruins, the princess gave the caravan guards one hour's grace to look around. Inside, they found more than they bargained for, because the ruins were none other than those of ancient Telar, the City of the Onyx Gates, where evil and corruption have survived even to the present day.

The once-mighty gates of the city are dented as if they had been rammed repeatedly, but no siege engine is visible nearby. In fact, if a fighter rolls his intelligence score or lower on 1d20, he can guess that the gates look like they were hammered down by huge fists, as if from a giant (they were attacked by many *Bigby's clenched fist* spells many years ago.)

The gates (or what's left of them) are made from an extremely dense, black hardwood brought here at great expense. The fittings of the gates and the huge bars that lock them from within are made from adamantite studded with

Random Encounters (Roll 1d8)

1. **Giant scorpion:** INT non; AL N; AC 3; MV 15; HD 5+5; hp 41; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10/1-10/1-4; SA poison sting (save vs. poison or die), stinging frenzy (two stings per round, no claw attacks) if reduced to 1 or 2 hp; SZ M; ML 11; XP 650; MC. This creature may be encountered either early or late in the day. It is on a hunting foray and has no connection with the missing princess. It fights to the death.
2. **Sandling:** INT non; AL N; AC 3; MV 12, burrow 6; HD 4; hp 24; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; SD immune to *sleep, charm, hold;* SZ L; ML 7; XP 175; MC. This monster is quietly resting in a patch of sand when the party invades its territory. The PCs may escape attack only if they move 100′ away from the sandling's location. It wouldn't know a princess if it saw one and has no connection with Avona.
3. **Manticore:** INT low; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12, fly 18 (E); HD 6+3; hp 45; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-8; SA tail spikes (1-6 spikes, fire up to four times per day); SZ H; ML 14; XP 1,400; MC. This monster knows about the princess (see area 6E) and is out scouting to see if anyone has come looking for her. It attacks with a swooping tail-spike volley to see how the PCs react. If it scores any hits, the manticore repeats all its missile attacks, then lands to melee. If it loses 50% of its hit points, it flies away to its lair in the ruins of Telar (area 6E).
4. **Dun pudding:** INT non; AL N; AC 7; MV 12; HD 8+1; hp 41; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 4-24; SA dissolve leather in one round (regardless of magical pluses); dissolve chain in two rounds, plate in four rounds (add +2 rounds per magical plus); SD immune to acid, cold, poison; blows from weapons divide; SZ M; ML special; XP 4,000; MC (Puddings, Deadly). This monster is simply out for a bit of fresh meat. It fights until slain or until the PCs manage to flee.
5. **Jaloni tribesmen** (6): AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; F1; hp 8 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 9; abilities unremarkable; spear, scimitar, arquebus (two tribesmen each). This patrol, mounted on camels, is encountered at a distance of no less than 100 yards. The tribesmen make their presence known without approaching the party. If the PCs seek to parlay, the tribesmen move away. If the adventurers are aggressive, the patrol defends itself if it must but attempts to retreat for reinforcements. These arrive in 1-3 hours, with 6-36 warriors attacking the PCs when they find them unless Firminon (see area 6B) is with the adventurers. If unmolested, the Jaloni shadow the PCs for 1-2 days to ensure that the outlanders mean no harm to Jaloni territory or livestock.
6. **Wild camels** (3): INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 21; HD 3; hp 17, 10, 9; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA spitting (25% chance of being blinded for 1-3 rounds); SZ L; ML 3; XP 65; MC (Animal, Herd). These three camels are slaking their thirst at a small spring when the PCs arrive. None can be trained or tamed without several months' hard work on the part of the PCs. If approached, the camels flee, but if cornered, they attack to escape.
7. **Giant snakes** (4): This encounter occurs at night, particularly while the PCs are sleeping. The snakes bite and attempt to coil around PCs. A roll of 20 indicates entanglement, and trapped adventurers must make their bend-bars strength rolls to be able to attack on the next round. These "snakes" are wanderers from the ruins of Telar and are really minions of Set (see sidebar for statistics).
8. **Minotaur lizard:** INT non; AL N; AC 5; MV 6; HD 8; hp 33; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 2-12/2-12/3-18; SA −5 to opponents' surprise roll; attack roll of 20 means victim trapped in jaws and cannot attack; SZ G; ML 9; XP 2,000; MC (Lizard). This monster rushes out from behind a dune or cluster of boulders to attack the party. It fights until it can grab something edible, then rushes away to eat.



onyx and jade. The combined value of the metal and jewels comes to 10,000 gp, though another expedition would have to be mounted to recover them.

2. The Great Sphinx.

Beyond the tangles of wood and metal that were the gates stands a 10'-tall plinth supporting the huge statue of a sphinx. The creature stretches its stony maw toward the entrance in an expression of malign ferocity.

If the PCs carefully search the plinth on which the statue rests for 60 man-minutes (elves and half-elves get their normal rolls after one round of searching), they will discover the secret trapdoor in its top, leading to area 2A below. Otherwise, the statue seems just a pitted and weathered piece of sandstone sculpture.

2A. Spiral Stairs. If opened from above, the trapdoor swings down with a sound of stone on stone, spilling dust and grit into the small space below. The area seen is a 10'-square landing, choked with cobwebs and dust, leading onto a staircase that spirals downward into darkness.

If the PCs arrive here from below instead of from above, they must detect the catch to open the trapdoor and get outside.

The cobwebs here are surprisingly tough, and sticky enough to entangle anyone carelessly negotiating the landing. They are home to four large spiders, which attack the PCs as they enter the secret room.

Large spiders (4): INT non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6, web 15; HD 1+1; hp 9, 6, 5, 4; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison (+2 on save vs. poison; 15 hp damage if save fails); SZ S; ML 7; XP 175; MC.

The stairs, which descend for 30', are cloaked with a *continual darkness* spell below the first two steps, foiling any light that might once have burned at area 2B. Two steps from the bottom of the magically darkened stair, a lever that disarms the trap in area 2B is hidden in the wall. The PCs have a mere 5% chance to accidentally discovery the lever in the dark. If they actively searched for the lever, or if the *continual darkness* spell is negated, there is a 30% chance that a PC can finding it. The lever is an on/off switch that is currently in the "on" position.

2B. Priestly Statues.

To the south, west, and east in this room are statues of figures in priestly garb. Each wears a tall helmet and a tightly fitting tunic. In its left hand, each statue holds a staff; its right hand grasps a coiled cobra. Twin iron sconces that once held torches are set into the walls to the southwest and southeast.

Except for the southern statue (see below), none of these figures is of value to the adventurers.

The room is magically *silenced,* with the addition of the wizard spell *permanency,* cast at the 18th level of magic use. The PCs will notice this effect as soon as they enter the room and begin poking around.

The secret door to the south may be opened into the corridor beyond if the southern statue is rotated 90° clockwise, but only if the lever at area 2A is switched to the "off" position. The PCs can open this door from the south side

(area 2C) regardless of the position of the switch. Opening the door from the south side does not cause the statue to rotate.

While the switch is "on," the statue cannot move but the southwestern sconce can be moved, opening a door to reveal a small space beyond. This is a trap, for if the sconce is twisted and the secret door opens, a sliding stone doorway slips into place between the spiral stairs and area 2B, blocking escape to area 2A and access to the switch.

The grinding noise that accompanies the stone door's movement cannot be heard due to the magical *silence,* so unless a PC is positioned at the foot of the stairs or is facing this exit, he has only a 25% chance to notice the door sealing shut. A successful saving throw vs. paralysis allows PCs to scoot through the aperture from either side before it closes fully. A cumulative +2 penalty to the save applies per character, who must dice for initiative to see in what order they pass through the opening. Anyone failing the save becomes trapped between the door and the jamb, suffering 6-36 hp damage per round until rescued or killed. Spells might be useful here (*transmute rock to mud,* for example), as a combined strength of 200 is needed to force the door back.

Four rounds after the trap is sprung, the room begins filling with sand from 16 3"-diameter vents hidden in the ceiling. It takes 15 rounds to completely fill, suffocating any trapped PCs. The reservoir of sand can empty only once. The PCs may choose to hide out in the hollow behind the torch sconce, but they'll have only 24 hours of breathable air before they suffocate (half that time for each additional person above two people). Also, closing the secret door locks it and resets the sconce, which can be moved again only when the lever on the stairs is in its "on" position.

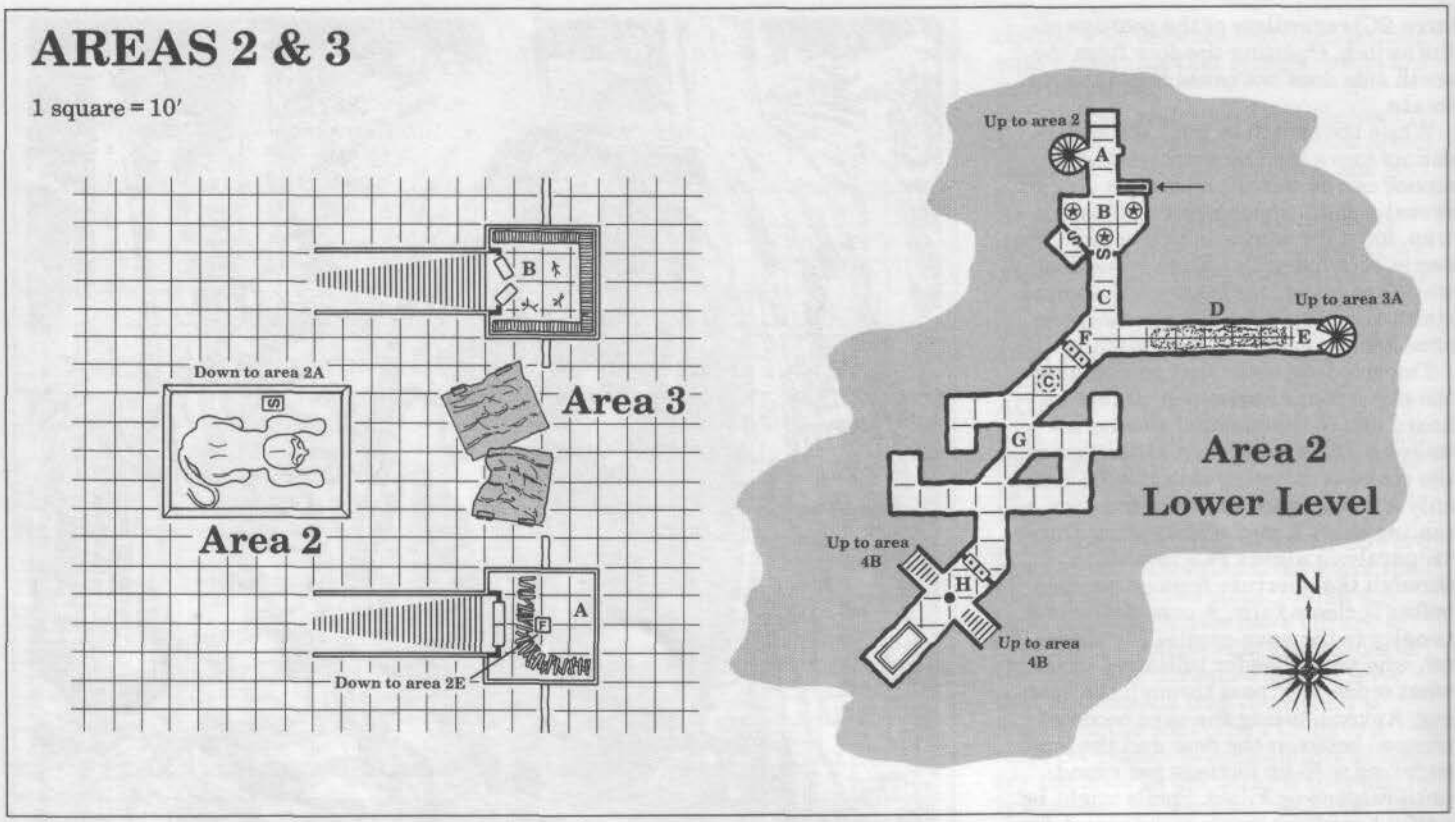
The barrier will move back, and the pouring sand will stop, if the lever on the stairs is switched to its "off" position. Remember, it must be off for PCs to open the southern secret door by rotating the statue; the lever must be on (thus arming the trap) to release anyone trapped in the alcove behind the torch sconce. Regardless of the status of the trap, or whether the switch is turned to "on" or "off," simply leaving the southern secret door open prevents *all* mechanisms from working.

2C. Corridor. The workings of this secret door are described at area 2B. Should the PCs have been so unfortunate as to set off the trap and fill area 2B with sand, any party members who open the secret door from the south side will flood the corridor with sand. They may dig out bodies and equipment without too much difficulty.

2D. Russet Mold. This corridor is covered for a distance of 50′ with a huge colony of russet mold. The adventurers must use alcohol, acid, salt, or the spells *cure disease* or *continual light* to kill this mold. Otherwise, spells like *teleport* might be necessary to bypass it.

Russet mold: INT non; AL nil; AC 9; MV 0; HD n/a; THAC0 15; #AT 0; Dmg 0; SA spores (3′-diameter cloud, 5d4 hp damage per round in cloud, save vs. poison or be infected with spore sickness); SD immune to weapons, cold, fire; SZ G; ML n/a; XP 0; MC (Mold).

2E. Spiral Stairs. This stairway rises 90′, connecting the top of the gate tower (area 3A) with the passageways beneath the Great Sphinx (area 2) and the Tomb (area 4).



2F. Barred Doors. The doors here are barred on the northeastern side. It takes a combined strength of 22 to lift each of the two steel bars.

Ten feet beyond the doors, a ceiling air shaft with a grille at its top reveals the open sky above; a 2′-high pile of sand covers the floor beneath the shaft. The grille is 30′ above the floor here. The grille's original wooden cover of planks was removed to area 6G about two weeks ago, allowing windblown sand to fall into this area. The grille is visible at street level just outside the buildings (areas 4 and 5) fronting the high priest's palace. Enterprising adventurers might remove the stone-imbedded grille with spells or bend its bars with strength, allowing access to the underground here.

2G. Minor Maze. The corridors beyond the barred doors are filthy and dusty. They take a few blind turns, serving as a mini-maze in which four minotaurs currently live. Though magically preserved to kill would-be tomb robbers passing through the *teleport* at area 4C, the minotaurs are not ill disposed toward some fresh food in the form of wandering adventurers.

Minotaurs (4): INT low; AL CE; AC 6; MV 12; HD 6+3; hp 39, 36, 32, 25; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2-8/2-8; SA double head-butt damage from charge; SD +2 bonus on surprise rolls, track prey by scent with 30% accuracy, immunity to *maze* spells; SZ L; ML 13; XP 1,400; MC.

The double doors to the south are barred from the opposite side.

2H. Crypt. Stairs descend from the trapped secret doors at area 4B to this cross-shaped crypt. A pillar in the center supports the spiral stairs on the level above.

The doors to the northeast are barred on this side. The bar can be lifted with a combined strength of 22 points.

A stone sarcophagus, its lid removable by 80 strength points, takes up the entire southwest section of the room. Inside the sarcophagus, a wooden coffin is packed in along with gold and silver bars to the value of 20,000 gp. Wrapped in strips of linen is the mummy of a high-level priest of Set whose long exposure to the aura of the Pool of the Dark Stars (at area 9C) has ensured his undead state after falling in battle. Anyone messing with his treasure is in trouble, because he'll follow adventurers who take his gold or silver, even miles out into the desert. He'll not, though, pursue them during daylight hours, burying himself in the desert sand or returning to the crypt, if the PCs are still in the ruined city during daylight. The mummy has no allegiance to anyone other than himself.

Mummy: INT low; AL LE; AC 3; MV 6; HD 6+3; hp 40; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1-12; SA *fear* (save vs. spells or stand rigid with fright for 1-4 rounds); disease; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; half damage from all weapons; immune to *sleep, charm, hold,* cold-based spells, poison, paralysis; SZ M; ML 15; XP 3,000; MC.

3A. Southern Gate Tower. This tower is one of two that protected the gates to the city. It is square, 40′ on a side, and stands 50′ high. A long, straight stairway runs from ground level to its high platform above.

At the top of this stairway, double doors stand closed. Inside, the once-roofless platform has been converted

into a chamber of sorts, constructed of piled timbers, canvas, and other debris. Canvas spreads out above the makeshift wall to form a canopy, or roof.

PCs coming up the stairs from area 2E emerge into darkness. The structure on top of this tower is lightproof; daylight cannot enter unless the canvas is slashed or burned.

The spectre of the garrison commander lingers in the darkness, transformed to its current state by his evil deeds while alive. It attacks with surprise if the PCs enter via the trapdoor. If they enter via the double doors in daylight, the spectre is powerless to attack and flees down the spiral stairs to area 2E.

Spectre: INT high; AL LE; AC 2; MV 15, fly 30 (B); HD 7+3; hp 38; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA energy drain (two levels); SD +1 or better weapon to hit; immune to *sleep, charm, hold,* cold-based attacks, poison, and paralysis; MR special; SZ M; ML 15; XP 3,000; MC.

Hidden in the debris are the spectre's former weapons: a *spear +2* and a *khopesh +1, +2 vs. lawful-good* creatures. Paladins and lawful-good clerics feel a definite aura of evil radiating from this latter weapon.

3B. Northern Gate Tower. The dimensions of this tower are the same as those at area 3A. The double doors stand slightly ajar at the top of the stairs, and a ranger can that the tracks of humanoids found here were made no longer than a fortnight ago (see areas 1 and 6G for an idea of who may have made these tracks).

Inside, the platform is much the way it was when Telar and Sepron fought their last battle. A wooden catwalk skirts the inner faces of the simple balustrade, over which stones and other missiles were cast. Its timbers are old and brittle, with a 20% chance of breaking beneath a PC, plus 10% per lb. above 98 lbs., for 1-4 hp damage.

Three complete skeletons remain here amid the odds and ends of spent arrows and darts flung from below. The skeletons appear to have been despoiled of any valuables, but a bone scroll case has rolled under the catwalk to the south and remains undetected. If the PCs find it, they discover it holds a scroll with three spells: *protection from fire elementals* (usable by any class of character), and the wizard spells *control undead* and *statue.* All are written at the 15th level of ability.

3C. Empty Tower. This tower is slightly larger than the gatehouse towers. It is identical to area 3B but doesn't contain bones or valuables. It may be used as a destination for a *teleport* spell cast by the guardian daemon who lives in area 4F.

4. Priest's Tomb. This building consists of a 20′ tall square, 60′ on a side, acting as a plinth for a square-based pyramid that adds another 30′ to the overall height. A single door is visible in the northeast wall at ground level. The stonework is old and pitted, but fragments of carvings and reliefs are still visible here and there. Above the door, a single carving of a jackal remains. This is the symbol of Set.

4A. Pivoting Door. This door pivots on its long axis, cutting the 10′-wide corridor beyond it in two. Inside, the walls of the corridors are painted with murals depicting pastoral scenes of wealth, bounty, and comfort. The subject of all this good fortune seems to be a larger-than-life figure, shown wearing robes of a priest of Set (like the statues at area 2B). The paintings are supposed to endow the owner of this tomb with good luck in the afterlife. Whether this is effective or not is debatable, as the occupant is currently in a state of unlife as a mummy at area 2H, downstairs.

4B. Secret Doors. The secret doors here open onto the stairways that connect with area 2H below the pyramid. Each door is trapped with a pressure-pad, on the corridor side, that drops a large block of stone in front of the doorway if the pad is stepped upon.

Even if this trap is triggered, damage can be avoided if the PC in front of the door makes a successful saving throw vs. paralysis. Otherwise, 6d6 hp damage is meted out to anyone unfortunate enough to get squashed under the block. It takes a combined strength of 105 to raise the stone sufficiently to rescue trapped PCs. Saving throws against crushing blow should be made for fragile items in the PCs' possession.

4C. Chamber of the Fountain. This room contains a dried-up stone fountain near the southwest wall. The archway in the northeastern wall maliciously *teleports* to area 2G (the minotaurs' lair) any person or object passing through it from area 4C. This is a one-way archway—PCs may walk through from area 4E to area 4C without mishap, though movement in the other direction is impossible without the use of a *wish* to negate the *teleport* effect.

Two goblets hang from fine silver chains attached to the now-defunct fountain. Each goblet is made from beaten gold and worth 50 gp.

4D. Shrine to Set. This room has a shrine to the deity Set in the western corner of the chamber. The statue is made from obsidian, worth 3,000 gp. However, anyone of other than lawful-evil alignment who touches it must save vs. *death magic* or be turned into a ju-ju zombie.

If the statue is successfully removed, six **minions of Set** (see sidebar for statistics) begin following the PCs in 2-24 hours, in order to recover it. These are drawn from the large number of minions at area 9C.

Atop the shrine's altar are flattened cakes of bread and a wooden bowl that once held an offering of wine. The bread has been preserved by the dry air, but it's covered with a newly grown colony of yellow mold. The mold spores may be touched off by someone fooling about with the statue or during combat with a ju-ju zombie victim of the shrine, at the DM's option.

Yellow mold: INT non; AL N; AC 9; MV 0; HD n/a; hp n/a; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA poison spores (10′ radius, save vs. poison or die); SD affected only by fire; MR 20%; SZ S; ML n/a; XP n/a; MC (Mold).

Ju-ju zombie: INT low; AL N(E); AC 6; MV 9; HD 3+12; hp 36; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12 or by weapon type; SA weapon use (if applicable), attacks as 6-HD monster; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; half damage from blunt and piercing weapons and from fire; immune to *sleep, charm, hold, death-magic,* poison, cold-based spells, all mind-affecting spells, electricity and *magic missiles;* turned as a spectre; SZ M; ML special; XP 975; MC (Zombie).

4E. Spiral Stairs. (See area 4C for details on the one-way teleport that operates in the doorway from area 4C to area 4E.)

The spiral stairs here climb 20′ into the pyramidal structure above (area

Minions of Set

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary to legion
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Average to high
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil
NO. APPEARING:	1-20 (or more)
ARMOR CLASS:	−2
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	3+1 (25 hp)
THAC0:	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3/2 in human form, or 1 in serpent form
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	By weapon type in human form, or 1-12 (bite) in serpent form
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Entanglment in serpent form
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Save as 10th-level warrior
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	10%
SIZE:	M (6½′) in human form, or H (13′ long) in serpent form
MORALE:	Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:	650

Minions are special servants of the deity Set. These minions usually appear as normal humans or demihumans to do their master's evil bidding. They are usually created from particularly adroit followers of Set, although they can be made by corrupting good beings, using devices like the Pool of the Dark Stars (see area 9C).

Combat: In human form, a minion of Set will always use a weapon if detection of the monster's true form might ruin its mission. The minion may also assume its natural form of a giant snake, biting for 1-12 hp damage. In addition, any successful biting attack allows the serpent a second to-hit roll to entangle its victim in its coils. The victim is not constricted, but his limbs are pinned and he must make a bend-bars/lift-gates strength roll to free himself; he will be unable to attack otherwise. Failure indicates the victim is trapped for that round, although he may attempt to struggle free in subsequent rounds. Entangled victims may be automatically bitten for maximum damage each round after being captured. Certain special minions of Set have poisonous bites (save vs. poison or take 4-24 hp damage, 2-12 hp if the save is made; XP 1,400), but none of these are present in this adventure.

Minions save as 10th-level fighters, and all possess 10% magic resistance. They never check morale. If magical weapons or useful magical devices are available, they will use them in human form, though magical armor or shields are never used.

Habitat/Society: Minions may be found in any society where Set (or his enemies) is worshiped. They may achieve their goals by gaining positions of power in local governments, or plot in other ways against the temples of Osiris and Horus. They have no society of their own but mix with others to spread evil.

Ecology: These creatures may evolve from particularly evil beings or be magically created. As such, they fit into the natural world only as subversives and impostors. Though omnivorous, they can go without food and drink indefinitely; the social customs they must observe when spying on their enemies dictate what they will eat. Minions do not breed and have no urge to collect treasure. If a minion of Set is slain in *polymorphed* form, it is enveloped in smoke, leaving behind its original, humanoid body.

4F). The first step is guarded with a *glyph of warding* that causes *blindness* to the lead PC if he fails a saving throw vs. spells. The second-level priest spell *find traps* will detect the nature of this *glyph,* enabling the PCs to bypass it.

4F. False Tomb. The stairs in area 4E come out in the square base of the pyramid. This area contains three stone sarcophagi and a square stone trough, the latter standing in the southwest corner. Eight sticks stand on end in this container, which radiates alteration magic.

If one of the sarcophagi is disturbed in any way, the sticks are magically transformed as per the fourth-level priest spell *sticks to snakes.* The snakes attack any person in the pyramid. If no one is left alive there, they patrol the area for 14 rounds before returning to their container and changing back to sticks. They return to snake form whenever the sarcophagi are disturbed, though killing a snake destroys it forever. Attempts to destroy the sticks will also activate this spell.

Poisonous snakes (8): INT animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 15; HD 2+1; hp 15, 12 (×2), 11, 9, 6 (×2), 5; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison (no modifier to save, onset time 1-6 rounds, save vs. poison or take 3-12 hp damage); SZ S; ML 8; XP 175; MC.

The sarcophagus to the northeast radiates a faint kind of alteration magic. A continual form of the *create food and water* spell keeps the occupant of the heavy stone container alive (this spell is dispelled when the lid is opened). A combined strength of 80 is required to raise the lid.

Inside the sarcophagus is a gelatinous cube, eager to get out and try some fresh food for a change. If opened, the sarcophagus is 50% likely to appear empty at first glance, due to the cube's transparency.

Gelatinous cube: INT non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 4; hp 32; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SA paralysis, surprise; SD immune to attacks based on electricity, *fear, hold,* paralyzation, *polymorph,* and *sleep;* SZ L; ML 10; XP 975; MC (Oozes/Slimes/Jellies).

The sarcophagus to the southeast also requires a combined strength of 80 to open. Inside is a wooden coffin that disintegrates from natural rot if touched. Its contents are a few decayed bones and teeth on a layer of humus. Some

300 gp glitter on the surface to entice PCs to further exploration. In a ragged packet at the foot of the coffin is a neatly folded cloak that radiates magic. The cloak is harmless if handled; if the cloak is donned, the wearer discovers—too late—that it's a *cloak of poisonousness* that kills instantly with no saving throw (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* page 164.)

The third sarcophagus (the one in the northwest corner) does not contain a coffin. Instead, it serves as a resting place for the guardian daemon Blodax, who spends a lot of his time here asleep. Rather than a huge slab as a lid, this vessel has a hinged, stone trapdoor that opens upward. When Blodax is "at home," he keeps his lid bolted from within. If the PCs knock politely, he'll open up.

There's a 65% chance that Blodax is inside the sarcophagus when the PCs enter the pyramid. If he's elsewhere, it's possible he'll welcome communication with the PCs when he returns, as long as they're not too belligerent. He knows nothing about the princess, though he does suggest that the PCs question Pashnar (area 9C), the efreeti, who "seems to run things around here these days." Blodax knows that Pashnar lives somewhere north of here, but he won't be too specific about the exact location.

Three hundred years ago, Blodax was summoned by Zarthon, a priest of Set, to guard an amulet, now worn around the daemon's neck on a platinum chain. The amulet was keyed to the priest's life force and has powers similar to the receptacle in a *magic jar* spell, but the occupant cannot voluntarily escape from the amulet or possess a living body. To release the trapped life essence, the amulet must be brought within 50′ of any human body that has been dead less than 24 hours. Then, the amulet must be destroyed by magical fire to transfer the life force into its new body.

When Zarthon later summoned the efreeti, Pashnar, to help his city win the war, he forced the efreeti to grant him the power of all three of the monster's *wishes* to ensure the success of one *wish.* With this *wish,* he commanded the efreeti to serve until Zarthon's death, with the proviso that the efreeti couldn't kill the priest or bring about his death. When his summoner was later *disintegrated* at the Battle of Telar, Pashnar was surprised to find himself still on the Prime Material plane. The transferral of Zarthon's life force into the amulet did not count as "death" for the purpose of ending the efreeti's service. Pashnar does not know the amulet even exists. In fact, he can destroy the amulet without breaking the conditions of his servitude, so long as he isn't told that it contains the priest's life essence.

The odd setup between the amulet, the guardian daemon, and the efreeti is the result of interrupted plans. Zarthon intended to give instructions to the daemon to find him a new body, should the priest's old one be destroyed, then to take the body and amulet to the efreeti and command the genie, in his master's name, to destroy the amulet with magical fire. (The daemon cannot use his own fiery breath to do this, as he cannot be commanded to personally destroy that which he has been set to guard.) But the invasion by Sepron took Zarthon by surprise, and the only instruction the priest managed to give the daemon was to keep the amulet far away from the efreeti, to avoid its accidental destruction and the dissipation of his life force.

If the PCs defeat Blodax and take the amulet, they see many tiny symbols inscribed on its reverse side. Translating the symbols with a *read magic* spell reveals "fine print" that details hundreds of perils to which the amulet is immune. Every possible event seems to be covered here, including things like physical blows, volcanic eruptions, *crystalbrittle* spells, corrosive acid baths, cold-based spells, natural and magical lightning, and hungry rust monsters. The notable exceptions to this list are any forms of magical fire, but it requires an intelligence check on 1d20 for the mage reading the amulet to realize this vulnerability. The amulet saves vs. magical fire as metal −8 (see the *DMG,* page 39).

Using magical fire to destroy the device when there is no fresh body within 50′ instantly destroys Zarthon's life force and sends Pashnar back to his own plane—though this result is not noted in the writing on the amulet. While the amulet and the priest's life force survive, the power of the *wish* that created the efreeti's conditions of servitude ensures that he will always have one remaining hit point, regardless of what happens to him.

Blodax, lesser guardian daemon: INT very; AL N(E); AC 1; MV 9; HD 8; hp 56; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-12/1-12; SA breath weapon for 5d6 hp damage (3× per day); SD +2 or better blunt weapon to hit; immune to *charm, hold, sleep, polymorph,* and *fear* spells; special daemon immunity to sharp weapons; SZ L; ML 16; XP 4,000; MC; special amulet, ring of *teleportation* (three charges remaining).

Blodax appears as a large ape with a single stubby horn protruding from his forehead. His eyes are like twin burning coals, and his fur is a rusty reddish brown. The daemon stands 6′11¼″ tall and is quite amiable (for a daemon), unless someone tries to take the amulet from him.

Blodax wears a *ring of teleportation* on the second digit of his left hand. This ring has three charges remaining, and as Blodax fulfills his duty by wearing the amulet around his neck at all times, he can *teleport* to any point in the ruins he desires. He will use the ring if reduced to half his current hit points, *teleporting* to area 3C, area 7A, or area 9B.

The efreeti Pashnar's statistics can be found at area 9C.

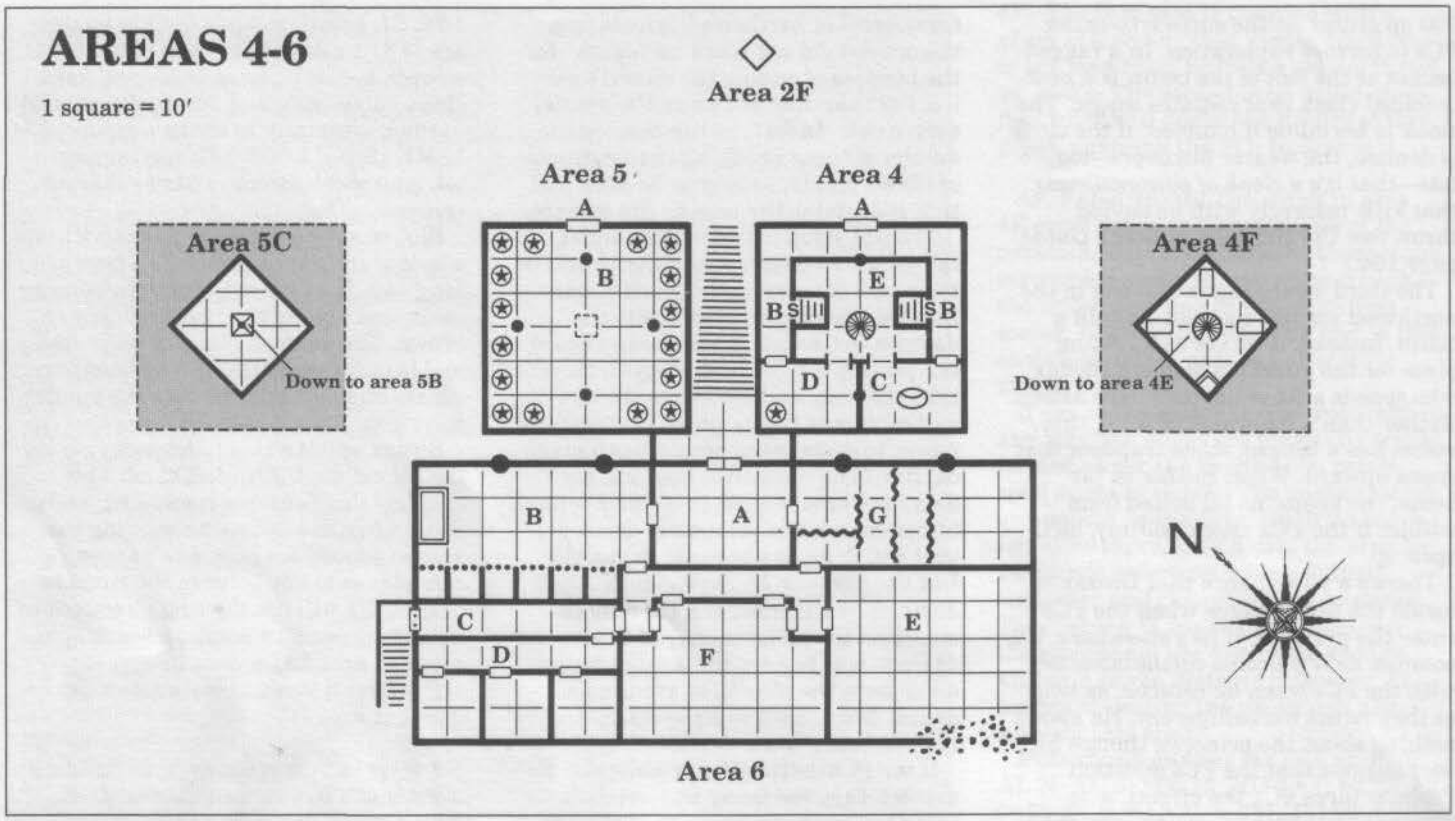
5. Scrying Chambers. This building looks much like its neighbor (area 4) from outside. It's a 20′-tall building, acting as a 60′-square plinth for a 30′-tall pyramid. Most of the carvings have disappeared from the exterior, though the remains of a carved coiled cobra are visible above the door.

5A. Stone Door. This door has a hidden trigger in its frame that, if pressed, allows it to roll upward with a sound of grinding stone. The door stays up for one turn, after which it closes automatically. The password, "Tenonani," is required to reopen the door from within or to close it immediately upon entering. A *legend lore* spell may reveal the password, at the DM's discretion.

The portal weighs one ton, so only exceedingly tough spikes can hold it aloft should PCs attempt to jam it open. The best method of keeping the door open is to place a statue or large lump of stone on the threshold. Of course, given the nature of the nearest statues (see area 5B), the statue may not take too kindly to this!

5B. Great Hall of Statues. The chamber here is a large hall, a full 60′ by 60′ square. Pillars support the ceiling 20′ above.

A *permanent illusion* of solid stone



covers a secret trapdoor in the center of the ceiling. PCs who discover this door may have to *levitate* or *fly* into the 6′ shaft that goes up into the pyramid, area 5C.

There are 16 statues in this hall, each a representation of an armed priest or warrior who excelled in the spread of evil. For each round of exploration spent in either this chamber or area 5C above, there's a cumulative 5% chance that all the statues animate to attack anyone entering or reentering this room. They cannot *levitate* and so cannot travel to area 5C. While the statues themselves remain stony, their weapons become real on animation. A roll of 1d4 will show how many of the 16 statues have magical weapons (these are called "higher animated statues").

Animated statues: INT non-; AL N(E); AC 3; MV 6; HD 4; hp 32 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 or by weapon type; SD half damage from edged weapons, cold, and magical fire; immune to *sleep, charm, hold,* mind-affecting spells, and normal fire; SZ M; ML never check; XP 420; new monster; staff, khopesh, or long sword.

Each of the higher animated statues has but one of the listed magical weapons. The DM should feel free to substitute other weapons if these are considered unsuitable. The weapons may be recovered and used by the PCs if their wielders are destroyed in combat by the adventurers.

Higher animated statue (1-4): INT non-; AL N(E); AC 2; MV 6; HD 5; hp 40 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16 or by weapon type; SD half damage from edged weapons, cold, and magical fire; immune to *sleep, charm, hold,* mind-affecting spells, and normal fire; SZ M; ML never check; XP 975; new monster; *staff of striking* with six charges; *dagger of venom +1* with three doses; *necklace of missiles* with 1 × 10-HD, 2 × 8-HD, 2 × 6-HD, and 4 × 4-HD missiles; *axe +2, throwing.*

5C. Mirrored Chamber. Access to this pyramid is via a 6′-wide shaft whose trapdoor, connecting with area 5B, is disguised with a *permanent illusion* to appear as part of the ceiling of the Great Hall of Statues.

The floor of this chamber is made from a dark marble flecked with white. Red and green crystals mounted in the corners and at the apex of the room glow with a faint luminosity that is undetectable if any light is brought in. The four sloping sides of the pyramid form the ceiling of the chamber, and they're each tiled with many mirrors that radiate faint magic but no good or evil.

The priests used this room to scry areas of interest in the city. The red and green crystals form a power source, though the enchantment has weakened over the years. Once, the whole city was decorated with these crystals, each glowing eerily in the night.

Roughly half of the mirrors here are now normal pieces of flat glass that are silvered to reflect whatever objects are placed in front of them. The PCs may see themselves reflected normally in these. Scenes visible in other mirrors are typically fuzzy or distorted, with some scenes running into each other as the mirrors malfunction from the effects of age. Other mirrors show complete darkness, as their subjects are now entombed in buried areas of the ruins. Some examples of visible scenes are:

—A view of the ruined gates and guard towers, seen as if through the

eyes of the Great Sphinx at area 2.

—A gloomy, dusty corridor with a barred skylight through which sunbeams (or starlight, as appropriate) provides limited illumination (the ceiling grille at area 2G). If any PCs have been *teleported* by the device at area 4C and are still missing, they'll show up in this scene.

—An apelike, red-furred creature, which wanders about the top of a high platform (area 3C). If the PCs have already met and killed Blodax at area 4F, the mirror shows the *amulet of life protection,* wherever it may now be.

—A lead-bound wooden door in a darkened room (area 7E).

—A prisoner languishing in a dirty cell and suffering from many wounds (this is either Nassar or Firminon, from area 6B.) If either or both of these characters are now with the PCs, the scene shows an empty block of cells.

—A circular pool of brackish waters flecked with many shifting pinpoints of light (the Pool of the Dark Stars, area 9C).

6. High Priest's Palace. This huge building towers over the twin pyramids, as it's set on a hill some 30′ above them. Cracked and weathered stone steps rise to brass-bound doors in the building's northeast wall. Entrance from the northwest is gained via a single stone door, barred from within (see area 6C). The outer wall has collapsed in the southern corner of the palace, allowing access into area 6E.

The palace housed the high priest and his entourage, and also contained facilities for magical experimentation. Elaborate processions were organized whenever the high priest traveled to the Temple of Set (area 7) to perform one of his frequent public ceremonies. Other, more secret rites were often carried out in the privacy of his personal shrine (area 6B). The most secret rites of all were carried out in the caverns at area 9. Today, the palace serves another evil purpose.

6A. Entrance Hall. The once-grand hall has been fouled with excrement and rubbish. A number of expensive Sephrani rugs lie ruined in a heap of tack and harness in the general mess. The junk stinks of the odor of unwashed dogs. There are numerous tracks of canines as well as those of a large, booted humanoid. All signs are recent, and if the PCs detected tracks around area 3B, they find some that match here.

6B. High Priest's Temple-Shrine. The chamber here is painted with flaking black paint. Its ceiling is studded with quartz in patterns reminiscent of the local star constellations. To the southwest, the wall is divided into six 10′ × 10′ chambers, like prison cells, with steel doors and bars. Against the northwest wall is a 10′ × 20′ tub covered with suspiciously dark stains.

This was the high priest's private temple, where victims for the ceremonies were imprisoned in the cells to await their horrible fate in the sacrificial vessel. The occasional stranger who disappeared in Telar ended up here.

All the locks and hinges on the cells have been recently oiled. The doors are all locked, and Scofula (the occupant of area 6G) holds the key. The first four cells are empty, but cells 5 and 6 each hold a semiconscious man. The man in cell 5 is a Sephrani named Nassar; the other man is a Jaloni called Firminon. Both men are wounded with disease-infected bite marks; they require *cure disease* and *cure wounds* spells to restore them to health.

If a thief character is in the party, he can try his open-locks skill. Otherwise, successful bend-bars strength rolls might be necessary to get into the cells unless the PCs have already liberated the keys from Scofula. When restored to health, each man can relate his story to the adventurers.

Nassar's Story

Nassar was a member of the escort assigned the task of safely delivering the Princess Avona to the tent of the Amir Elka Runa. After being halted by a sandstorm, the princess commanded the men to explore the old towers and strange monuments that the shifting sands had uncovered.

Nassar explored the gate tower north of the ruined gates (area 3B) with a party of four other warriors. The rest of the escort split into small groups to look at other areas, the princess going with one group into the city. Nassar's party found gold and silver in the tower, but when they descended, they were surprised by a huge serpent that he swears grinned at them before slithering off toward the ruins at area 8.

Then things became confused. They heard the baying of many dogs far away. They were set upon by strange unarmored warriors, bearing swords and accompanied by more of the huge serpents. Nassar saw his companions flee through the gates, pursued by the swordsmen. He went the other way, toward where he'd last seen the princess, but a pack of monstrous hounds came, each with two snapping heads. He was severely bitten as he fought with them, but worse was to come. An ancient crone, grinning evilly, scattered the dogs and grappled him to the ground. He claims she had the strength of two men, and claws and teeth like a leopard. When Nassar awoke, the PCs were standing over him.

Nassar is despondent over his failure to adequately protect the princess, and he insists on accompanying the adventurers to find her if they have not already done so. He will make use of any weapons the adventurers let him borrow, or will fashion himself a club if no other weapons are available.

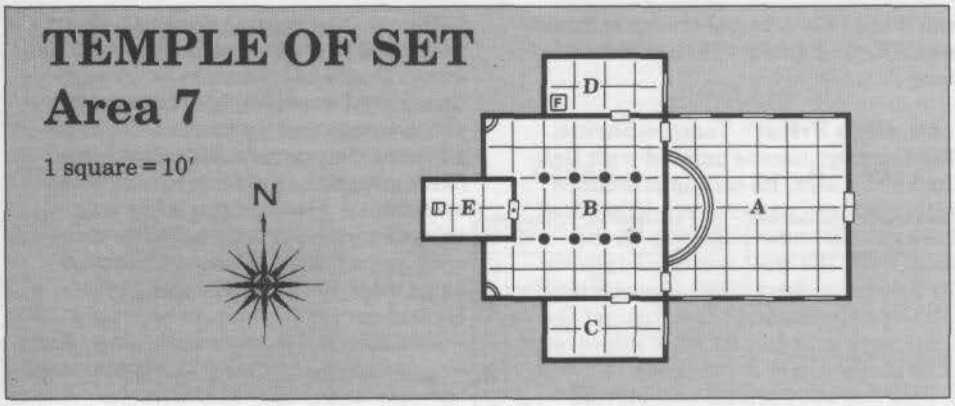
Nassar, Sephrani elder: AL LN; AC 8; MV 12; F3; hp 27 (1 now); THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (unarmed); ML 12; S 14, D 16, C 17, I 13, W 10, Ch 13; proficient in scimitar, dart, and dagger.

Firminon's Story

The Jaloni warrior, Firminon, tells a similar tale, although his first view of the ruins was as a captive. Firminon had been on patrol with two other Jaloni (sent to spy out the strength of the Sephrani party bearing the princess, in case of trickery—but he'll not tell the PCs or Nassar this) when a pack of death dogs, led by an old crone of like description to the one in Nassar's tale, attacked them in the desert.

Firminon shudders as he recalls how the hag devoured his companions whole in a matter of minutes, though she chose to overpower him to bring before someone she called the Master. The hag has paid visits to ensure both he and Nassar are still alive. He is no longer sure how long they've been here, though Nassar was here when he arrived, a week or more ago. He's been fed a minimum of foodstuffs, whose origins he's afraid to speculate on, and given the barest amount of water.

He, too, is eager to leave and take up arms. He values the planned marriage



of Princess Avona and the Amir Elka Runa. Though he dreads meeting the hag again, he'll certainly accompany the PCs on their search if they've not yet located the princess.

Firminon, Jaloni warrior: AL LN; AC 8, MV 12; F4; hp 44 (1 now); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (unarmed); ML 12; S 18/31, D 16, C 17, I 1C, W 9, Ch 15; proficient in arquebus, hand axe, long sword, spear.

6C. Side Entrance. The stone door here is barred from within. The metal hinges of the door are freshly greased, and the bar has been adjusted so that it opens to a strength of only 4. From outside, one successful bend-bars strength roll will break the bar and push in the door.

6D. Priests' Quarters. These three rooms were once the quarters of the personal clerical assistants to the high priest. Each room has been ransacked, and only the crumbling timbers of the beds and lockers remain. The door to the northwest room was shattered, allowing access to a single wandering fire toad before the other exits were closed by an annis, Scofula, whose lair is at area 6G. The annis plans to use the toad later as a guardian.

Fire toad: INT low; AL CN; AC 10; MV 6, hop 6; HD 4 + 1; hp 16; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg variable; SA breathe *fireball* at will (save for half damage); SZ S; ML 8; XP 270; MC (Toad, Giant).

6E. Manticore's Lair. This chamber was once a banquet hall for guests of the high priest. There is a large hole in the southern corner of the room where the wall collapsed some time ago.

Instead of the rich tapestries and rare timbers that once graced this hall, the chamber is now foul and dirty. If the PCs encountered the manticore during their trek across the desert (see Random Encounters sidebar for statistics), the monster may now be nursing its wounds atop its nest of withered trees, thorn bushes, stones, boulders, and oddments of lumber. If the adventurers have already killed the manticore, the room is unoccupied.

The manticore has scavenged treasure from about the ruins and has hiddent the following items in its nest: 9,104 sp, 4,379 gp, a silver goblet (worth 300 gp), a small gold idol of Set (worth 600 gp), a diamond brooch (worth 900 gp), and a clerical scroll with the spells *speak with dead, summon insects,* and *free action* (all written at the 8th level of ability).

The manticore knows that some human princess and her escorts were hunted down in this area recently, but it isn't sure of their fate and believes they are all dead now. Any combat with the manticore in this room will alert the annis, Scofula, in area 6G, to the presence of intruders (assuming she's still alive). If alerted, she's 50% likely to fetch her pack of death dogs from area 6F to investigate the disturbance. The rest of the time, she'll head off to the lair of Pashnar (area 9C) to tell him that strangers have once more found the location of the ruins.

6F. Dog Kennels. This area used to be the kitchen and food storage area. Now it stinks of decay and the odor of dogs. The carcasses of several camels, once belonging to Princess Avona's party, lie moldering among gnawed bones and refuse. Piles of motley hides and odd bits of junk are pulled into beds for several dozen two-headed canines, which begin baying an alarm if any door to their kennel room is opened. Their noise alerts their mistress, Scofula (area 6G), who'll arrive in two rounds. These death dogs launch themselves at anyone stupid enough to walk into the room.

Death dogs (44): Int. semi; AL NE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 2 + 1; hp 14 each; THAC0 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1-10/1-10; SA disease (save vs. poison or contract a rotting disease that kills in 4-24 days if left untreated); SZ M; ML 12; XP 120; MC (Dogs).

Young death dogs (30 noncombatants): AC 10; MV nil; HD 1; hp 3 each; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg nil; SZ S; ML 2; MC (Dogs).

6G. Hag's Lair. The apartments of the high priest have been converted into a bizarre boudoir hung with silks, rugs, and tapestries. The room is divided by hanging textiles strung from ropes running from wall to wall, and hung with many little alarm bells that tinkle when the hangings are brushed aside. In the southeast, bags, sacks, stuffed cushions, and the wooden cover from the grille at area 2F form a huge bed or nest.

The usual occupant of this room is an annis named Scofula who commands the death dogs at area 6F. The hag once lived in a cave in the side of a wadi not far from Telar. She discovered the newly uncovered ruins hours before Avona and her party arrived. She wisely decided to appeal to the efreeti Pashnar's vanity by paying him homage when she happened upon him in her nighttime explorations. In return, she was made his lieutenant and given shared accommodation with the manticore in the palace. Scofula moved in her pack of hunting hounds and began plotting.

The wicked hag has captured prisoners she plans to torture for the efreeti's amusement (see area 6B), but she knows nothing about the history of the ruins and cares even less for the futile works of humankind. Secretly, she considers herself brainier than Pashnar and dreams of becoming powerful at his expense. Scofula has no idea of the power of the Pool of the Dark Stars (area 9C) nor any inkling that the partnership might ever end at anything other than her own instigation.

In a fight, the hag typically mobs opponents with her death dogs until most enemies are dead or incapacitated. Then she moves in to deal with anyone insolent enough to continue resistance.

She is none too keen on a fair fight, so she will cast all three of her *fog cloud* spells at once if things are going against her. If she does have to flee, she remembers her duty and runs off to Pashnar's lair at area 9C to warn him of the threat (and save her own skin with a powerful ally). If the efreeti has already been dealt with, she drops any notion of fighting the adventures and flees to the safety of her isolated cave, two miles to the east.

Scofula, annis: INT very; AL CE: AC 0; MV 15; HD 7+7; hp 42; THAC0 9; #AT 3; Dmg 9-16/9-16/3-9; SA grapple, cast *fog cloud* 3× per day; SD *change self* at will, −1 to damage from edged weapons; MR 20%; SZ L; ML 15; XP 6,000; MC (Hag).

7. Temple of Set. This building was used as the city's main center of worship, and it seems to have suffered badly from the elements.

7A. Public Temple. The great wooden doors are wind scarred and stripped of all decoration by the action of the sand-filled breeze. Inside, the hall measures 60′ square, with sand piled in through its broken, gaping windows and the large hole in its sagging roof.

This is where ordinary members of the populace left offerings to Set. Other than the worn plinth to the west of the room, there are no furnishings or decorations anywhere.

7B. Inner Sanctum. This room is dark and windowless, though some light may filter in from area 7A if the doors are open. This chapel is more ornate than the outer area, as it was designed for ceremonies not meant to be seen by the ordinary public.

Slender pillars of black-lacquered pine stand in rows leading toward a small lead-bound door in the west wall. The door appears to be locked but has no keyhole and does not radiate magic. In the northwest and southwest corners of this room are twin water fonts, each resembling a 3′-high marble birdbath.

The font to the northwest is magicked to produce unholy water for use in the rites of Set and against creatures of good alignment. Any water decanted into the font is turned to unholy water by its magic. The font can produce up to six gallons of unholy water per day but ceases to function forever if taken from the temple. A paladin or lawful-good character would do a great service for the cause of good by destroying this evil font (award up to 500 XP, depending on how inventive the PCs are in destroying the font).

The font to the southwest is bone dry. It radiates magic and functions as the (nonmagical) key to the lead-bound door to the west. A PC must twist the bowl of this font in a counterclockwise direction to release the mechanical locking mechanism of the door.

However, if the font is twisted in the opposite direction, the whole temple begins to rumble. The noise ends abruptly one round later as an angry earth elemental bursts through the floor in search of its unwitting summoner. Use of the font to summon the elemental is considered conjuring by spell, as the item works only once.

The PCs may choose to run away, as the slow elemental will return to its own plane in three turns anyway unless it's engaged in combat. A *dismissal* spell has only a 50% chance of getting rid of the monster. PCs who *fly* or *levitate* subtract two points per die of damage (to a minimum of one point per die) from the elemental's fists.

Earth elemental: INT low; AL N; AC 2; MV 6; HD 8; hp 37; THAC0 12; #AT 1; Dmg 4-32; SA special damage to constructions with foundations in earth or stone; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; SZ L; ML 15; XP 2,000; MC (Elementals, Air/Earth).

7C. Vestry. Somehow, the window to this chamber has remained intact, keeping out the wind and sand. The room is filled with dust and cobwebs, however, and the air is dry and hot.

Hanging on pegs along the walls are hooded robes, cloaks, and vestments in varying states of preservation. In the pocket of one robe is an ivory *wand of fear* with three remaining charges. A gold medallion is hooked onto the peg beneath another cloak; the garment must be removed to discover it. The medallion is a religious article, worth 2,000 gp if sold to a priest of Set but only 95 gp if sold for the gold content alone.

The cloak in the northeast corner is decorated with a spider motif sewn onto its back. It's a *cloak of arachnida,* which might be of use to the adventurers.

7D. Storage. The window here is broken, the shelves collapsed, and sand covers the entire floor. Digging in the sand can uncover some earthenware jars, most of which are broken and their contents spilled. One or two hold rotted fruits and grains, left as offerings by commoners using the public temple (area 7A).

A sacrificial knife lies beneath the sand. Its ivory handle is an intricate carving of a fabulous, fanged head, but the blade is now useless, and the handle is worth only 75 gp.

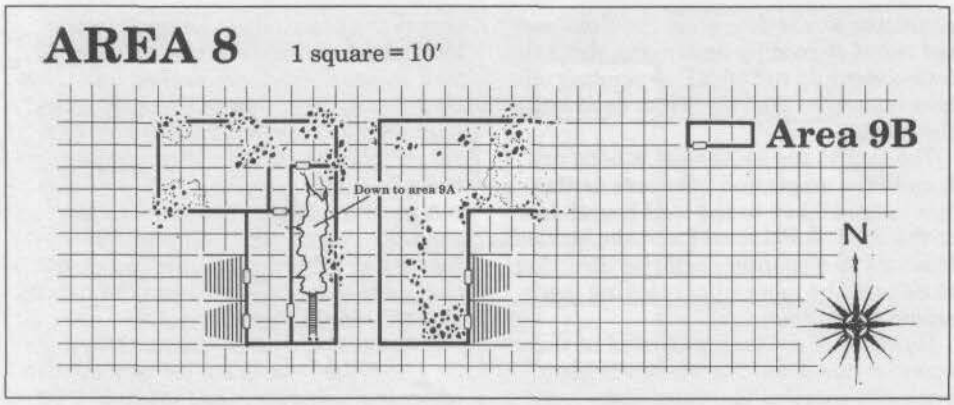
A secret trapdoor in the southwest corner of the floor is buried beneath the sand. It opens downward into a 5′ × 10′ space that is 3′ deep. A lacquered box hidden there opens to a light touch. Within the box, lying on top of 7,000 gp, is a bone case containing a scroll that is *cursed* to *teleport* the reader to one of the cells in the high priest's palace (area 6B). There is no saving throw to avoid this *curse,* and the scroll is erased on activation of the spell.

7E. Hall of Ultimate Enquiry. The lead-bound door to this chamber is locked by a mechanical device connected to the font in the southwest corner of area 7B. The hall behind the door is immune to any outside *scrying,* including *clairvoyance, clairaudience,* or any similar spell.

Inside, the floors, walls, and ceiling are painted jet black. There is no noticeable dust or debris. Against the west wall, facing the door, is a large iron seat that is unadorned. If the correct ritual (too prolonged and expensive for PCs) is performed, the iron seat becomes the focus to conjure a special messenger from Set himself. This being appears in the chair, often appearing in different guises: a giant snake, a living statue, a giant grasshopper, etc. The high priest used this place to communicate with his god by means of the messenger.

Although summoning Set's messenger is beyond the PCs' powers, anyone who sits in the chair will still be affected as if having cast the fifth-level wizard spell *contact other plane,* though the plane contacted is 75% likely to be of evil alignment. The spell is cast as if at the 9th level of ability, so four questions may be asked of the power contacted (treat this power as Intelligence 19 for reckoning results).

The iron seat functions once per day while safely hidden in this chamber. The device begins to disintegrate irrevocably if moved elsewhere.



8. Wrecked Barracks. These buildings housed the troops of the city, before the final Battle of Telar. The barracks are largely destroyed and bear scars ranging from big pock-marked acid burns to craters and melted stones where *fireballs* and other magicks were detonated.

Along the inner wall of the western building, there's a sudden drop away into darkness where the floor has been *disintegrated.* To the south, huge iron stakes have been driven into the wall and floor, suspending a rope ladder that drops into the dark shaft. PCs may descend this ladder to the bottom, 100′ below. Before the building was destroyed, a trapdoor in the floor here opened onto a spiral staircase. The ladder was anchored here by minions of Set who serve Pashnar, currently holed up at area 9C.

9. The Caverns. Pashnar the efreeti lives in the caverns beneath the city, where the priests held secret conclaves beyond any interference from curious strangers.

9A. Entrance from Barracks. The remains of the base of a spiral staircase lie amid rubble in this worked cavern. To the east, a pair of doors stand firmly closed, flanked by twin stone statues, One faces into the corridor, the other faces across the corridor in front of the doors.

Each statue is telepathically linked with Pashnar through the power of the Pool of the Dark Stars. Any noise or visible movement within 30′ of the statues is transmitted to the efreeti. PCs who are both *silenced* and *invisible* may pass the statues easily without raising an alarm.

9B. Stairs to the Hovel. This long corridor runs to a set of spiral stairs that emerge at a secret trapdoor in a hovel on the main map. Two statues, identical to those at area 9A, guard the entrance to this corridor.

9C. The Pool of the Dark Stars. There is a palpable sense of evil here in Pashnar's lair, centered on the circular, inky pool near the middle of the cave.

The Pool of the Dark Stars is named for its glittering, shifting surface that blinks pinpoints of light like stars in the night sky. The pool was and still is used to create minions of Set by the immersion of victims in its unholy waters. Its powers can be permanently destroyed in any one of a number of ways as the DM desires, from using a *wish* down to destroying the stonework or "polluting" the water with a large quantity of holy water while casting high-level *bless* spells on it; creative PCs should not be frustrated for long. An award of up to 5,000 XP is suggested for destroying the pool.

Any person immersed in the liquid is changed into an unquestioning servant of the cult of Set: a minion of Set (see sidebar). Any injured minion reimmersed in the pool is the recipient of a *heal* spell. Any nonminion attempting to use the pool as a curative device is usually turned into a minion, with no saving throw. Exceptions include high-level priests of Set (5th level and above).

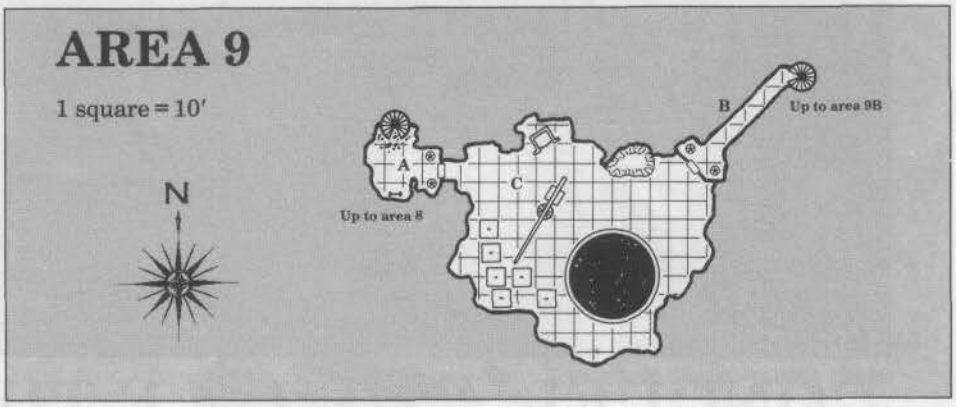
Even without immersion, the pool has an insidious effect on creatures. Its aura gradually corrupts nonminions to evil. For creatures who fall victim to the pool in this way, the aura becomes addictive and sustaining, so that food and drink are no longer required, as long as the victim remains within 100′ of the pool.

The efreeti, Pashnar, has had centuries to absorb the pool's magic, to the point where he has become a substitute high priest of Set and fulfills his role by trying to capture more people to turn into minions of the god. His telepathic link with the statues at areas 9A and 9B was previously possible only for high priests of the cult.

Around the cavern are reminders of the city's evil past and present. Near the pool are six wheeled cages and a wooden crane to lower them into the pool. None are currently occupied. Around the cages are 22 long swords, once used by the Telari and well preserved over the centuries. The minions now use them when fighting in human form.

To the northeast, the Princess Avona and survivors of her escort lie quietly in a 10′-deep pit. They have been transformed into minions of Set and have no recollection of their former lives. They are presently in their giant-snake forms and act under the control of Pashnar. Nothing short of a *wish* will change them back to their normal forms unless they will the transformation. One of the snakes (the former princess) is slightly smaller than the others and wears a tight belt of beaten gold discs about its body—the necklace that Abu-Nec Adran had asked the PCs to return (see "The Tent of Abu-Nec Adran"). The disks slow the princess/minion to MV 6.

The efreeti himself sits on a blackened wooden throne, confident of his ability to deal with any possible intruders. He has adjusted to the evil influence of the pool and no longer desires to return to his own plane. He is effectively indestructible as long Zarthon's amulet has not been destroyed, having 1 hp remaining from his total no matter what happens to him. The amulet's destruction will immediately *gate* the efreeti home. The efreeti will not recognize the amulet's potential effects on him unless the PCs foolishly tell him; in this event, Pashnar asks or bargains for the amulet, saying he will "deal with it properly." He then carefully takes the amulet and drops it into the Pool of the Dark Stars, where it (and the master he swore to never slay) will be out of harm's way. Then the efreeti attacks the PCs to destroy them completely. He knows that he has been quite unkillable before, and he feels the pool's horrific powers will best safeguard the amulet (if those miserable adventurers were telling the truth!).



Pashnar, efreeti: INT very; AL LE; AC 2, MV 9, fly 24; HD 10; hp 73; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 3-24 (3d8); SA create *wall of fire* once per day, create *illusion* once per day, *produce flame,* cause *pyrotechnics;* SD immunity to normal fire; magical fire subtracts −1 from attack and damage rolls; become *invisible,* assume *gaseous form, enlarge* (as a 10th-level wizard), *polymorph self,* grant up to three *wishes* (see following note); SZ L; ML 16; XP 4,000; MC (Genie). Under no circumstances can the efreeti be forced to grant more *wishes* while he is still in service to the priest of Set who summoned him.

Statistics for Princess Avona and her group are the same as for minions of Set, shown in the sidebar, except for the princess/minion's reduced movement rate. Including the princess, there are 18 **minions** to oppose the party, if commanded to by Pashnar. When injured, the minions leap into the Pool of the Dark Stars for *healing.* Should Pashnar be sent to his home plane, the minions become free willed but are 50% likely to bask in the aura of the pool rather than leave to spread evil. Note that if slain, the bodies of the minions transform into their former bodies, which should provide an immediate clue to their slayers as to what has gone on.

Concluding the Adventure

Given the circumstances of the Princess Avona's plight, the PCs will obviously have difficulties in completing the original goal of the adventure. They may even have to kill her in self defense if they cannot capture her, but the chieftain of her tribe will not hold it against the PCs if they explain things carefully and offer proof.

If the tribesmen Nassar and Firminon survive the adventure, they can speak for the PCs' actions. This may prove essential, as a major sandstorm will hit the area 1-4 days after the PCs' departure, obliterating all traces of the ruins once more (unless the DM wishes to set more adventures there).

Further Adventures

The PCs may carry away the amulet that protects Zarthon's life essence, intending to identify its uses at a later (and safer) date. (In this event, the efreeti will probably still be in charge of things at area 9C.) If the PCs later engage in combat and the amulet is destroyed in a magical fire attack (such as by a *fireball),* the evil priest's life essence will be transferred into any fresh body within 50'. This could be another PC killed in the same attack.

If the PCs accidentally or purposefully free the evil priest from the amulet, they will have made a serious mistake. The evil priest is a rather ungrateful 20th-level cleric of Set whose statistics and spells should be chosen by the DM as desired. He was planning to use lots of combat spells on the day he was *disintegrated,* and he had barely gotten started when he was put out of the fight. He immediately attacks all near him who do not wear emblems or shout phrases identifying them as followers of Set. (Remember that the efreeti will be freed with the amulet's destruction, too.)

If Scofula the annis escapes Telar, her pack of death dogs may once more surface in the Desert of Norbia. The cave in which she lives may merit exploration, which can be accomplished if the Jaloni or Sephrani hire the PCs to eradicate this monster now that they're aware of her existence.

If the PCs merely capture Avona in serpent form, she will revert to human form and attempt to get her freedom in any way she can. She will be extremely dangerous and will recognize no one from her tribe if returned there; the PCs will receive their promised award, but the former princess will eventually be slain by her family.

If the PCs do manage to return Avona to full humanity, they may yet run into difficulties. Being very vain and proud (and chaotic neutral), she lies about her experiences to avoid making the disaster at Telar appear to be her own fault, and seeks to turn the tribe against the adventurers. Being familiar with Avona's temperament, her father, Abu Nec-Adran, will hesitate to order the PCs' immediate demise, prefering instead to collect evidence before rendering a judgment. The tribal clerics, once they return from their journey, will be able to divine the truth of the matter if the PCs are still around as friends or prisoners. If made fully human again, treat Princess Avona as a 0-level human with no remarkable statistics.

The efreeti, Pashnar, may yet wreak havoc even if sent to his home plane. The effects of the Pool of the Dark Stars have forever turned him to the evil ways of Set, and he will set about on a personal crusade to track down and destroy the PCs at a later date. The efreeti will no longer be as unkillable as he once was, being freed from the effects of Zarthon's *wish* spell, but he might have gained other new powers from his jackal-headed deity in return for his service. This would make for a good follow-up adventure when the PCs have reached higher levels.

As noted earlier, the adventurers might be tempted back into the ruins of Telar for other treasure or goals. But if the ruins shown on the main map are eventually enveloped by the sands, might not other areas open up for exploration?

And what about the continuing maneuvering of the Sephrani and Jaloni? The PCs could become entangled in the politics of the region by accident or by someone else's design. Ω

A LOCAL LEGEND

BY GREG RICK & BRAD SCHELL

Nine years have passed, and the terror has returned.

Artwork by Jim Holloway

Having just graduated from college during a recession, Brad and Greg are finding it easy to avoid entering the real world. They enjoy writing fiction and working on their AD&D® worlds. When they find the time, both like to paint miniatures.

This short AD&D adventure occurs during winter, while the characters are staying overnight in a village. It is suitable for a party of 3-6 player characters of levels 1-2 (about six total levels). There are no required character classes or skills; a good mix of both will prove best. Since a berbalang plays the central role in the story, it will be helpful to read the description of this creature in the *Monstrous Compendium*. Note, too, the importance of round-by-round timekeeping once the PCs discover the monster's lair (see "The Berbalang's Lair").

Adventure Background

The PCs are spending the night in the small village of Trellmont, perhaps while traveling elsewhere or visiting relatives here. As the party soon discovers, the village's inn is already packed with occupants due to a large merchant caravan that is staying overnight. The caravan master is a frequent guest at the inn and has obtained permission to overcrowd all available rooms. Therefore, the PCs must find somewhere else to sleep on this winter night, since the surrounding snow-covered farmland may not be camped on (not to mention that it's cold outside, too).

As long as the PCs have not acted like ill-mannered ruffians to the innkeeper, one of the local farmers drinking at a nearby table overhears their predicament and offers to put the PCs up in his barn for 3 cp per person.

Farmer Korolard: AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (unarmed); ML 9; 6 cp, wagon and mule tied up outside.

Korolard talks with the PCs on the ride to his house in order to form a better idea of what they are like. If they seem pleasant enough, he offers them dinner and breakfast with his wife and six children at no extra charge. If Korolard gains a bad impression of the party, he charges 1 cp per person and brings their meals to the barn. Except for the braying of Korolard's mule, the frosty night passes uneventfully.

Unfortunately, the night does not pass so quietly for Korolard's neighbor and friend, Lingus. The village of Trellmont suffers from the episodic ravages of a sinister creature, and Lingus's oldest son, Erowyn, is the first to fall prey this ninth year. According to the local legend (see "The Legend of the Demon-Spirit"), three humans—typically young men—are taken each winter by the village's evil demon-spirit.

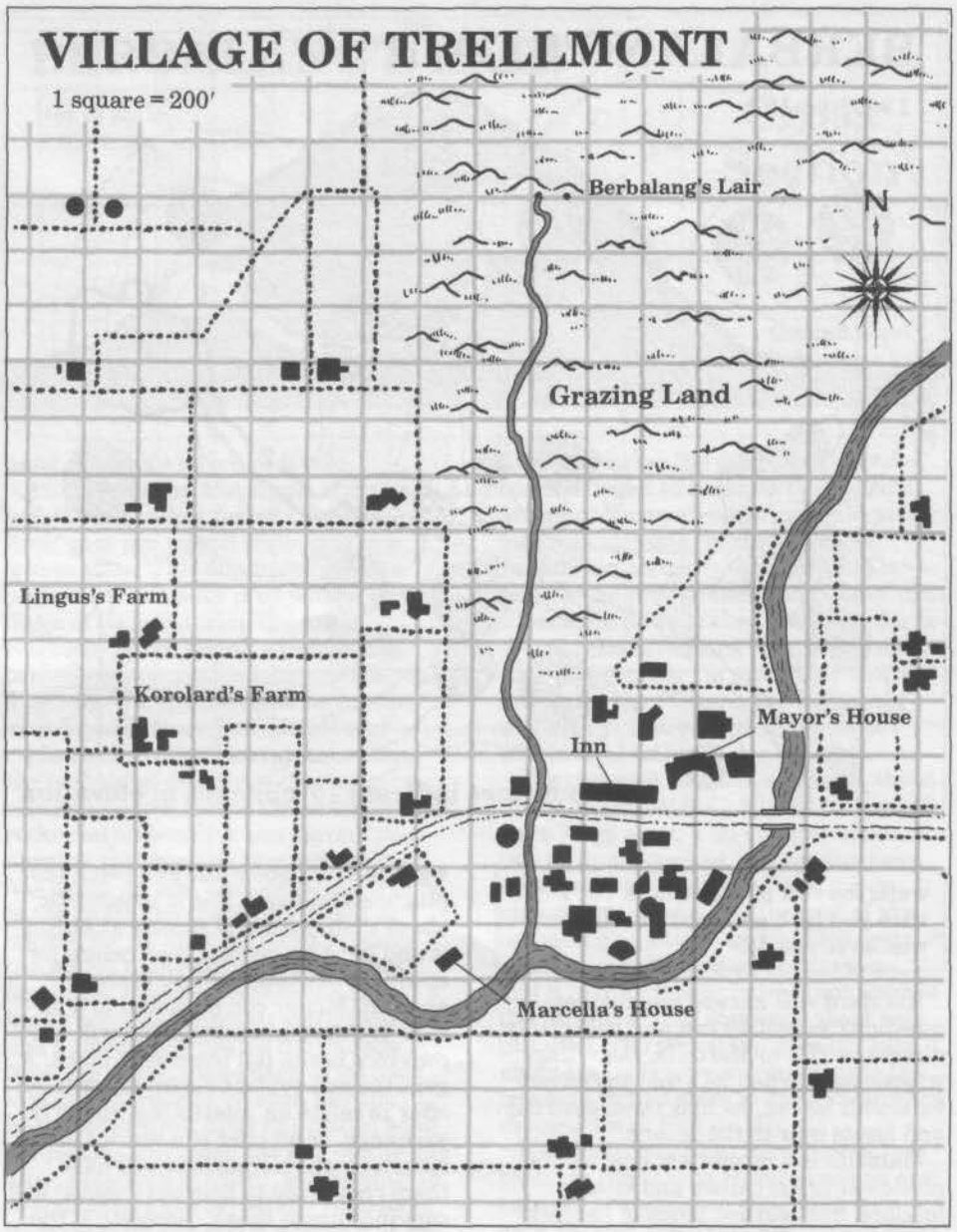
This demon-spirit is a berbalang who, despite being chaotic evil, has become very cyclical in its hunting due to its success. The berbalang has a total of 36 lairs near villages, ports, and large cities. The location of the lairs forms a rough circle. It takes the berbalang exactly nine years to complete its circuit, staying at each lair for three months and taking one victim a month, during the full moon, before moving on to the next lair. Erowyn was late coming home from the tavern and so made a perfect victim who never even realized what was happening.

In the morning, Lingus arrives at Korolard's house just after breakfast and requests his presence outside in a very sober tone of voice. The PCs easily notice Lingus's red-rubbed eyes. After briefly conversing just outside the door, Korolard approaches the PCs, appearing stunned, and informs them that he and his neighbor are going into town, offering them a ride if they wish to come along.

During the trip, any PC observing Lingus notices his white hands gripping the side of the wagon and his unwavering stare straight in front of him. If anyone tries to speak to Lingus, he does not respond, and Korolard looks back with a plea in his face asking for the party's silence. If the PCs persist, Korolard curtly tells them that Lingus's oldest son is lost.

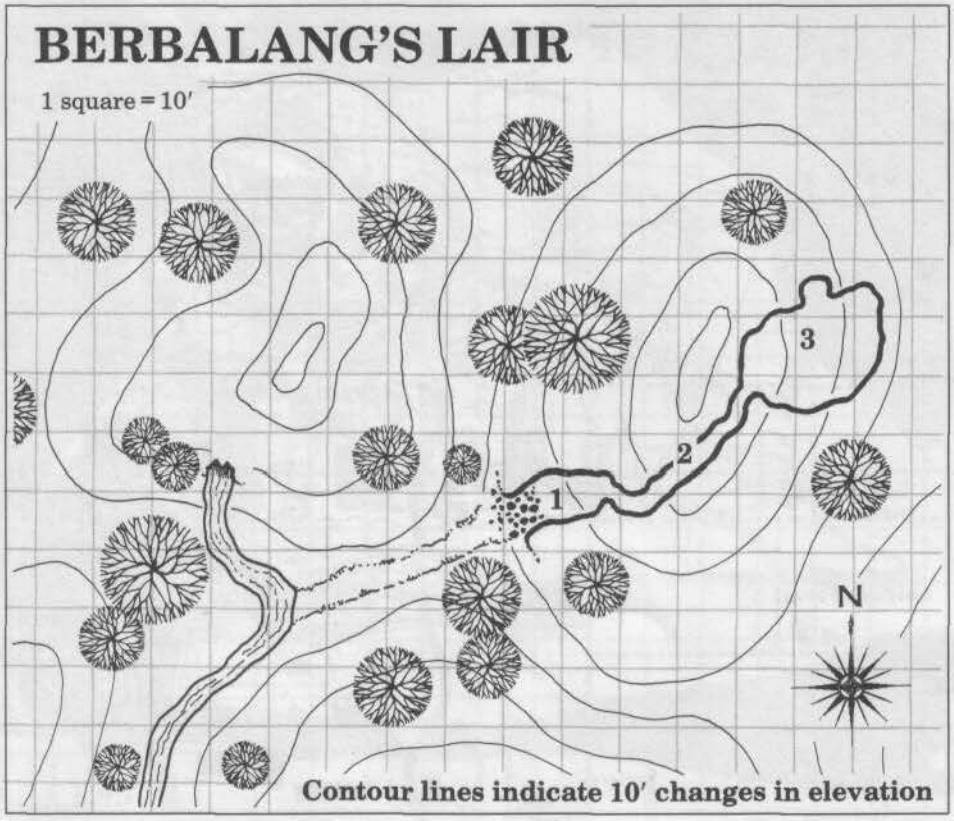
When the group arrives in town, Lingus walks straight over to a large house near the inn (the mayor's house), knocks on the door, and goes inside. If the PCs have shown an interest in Lingus's trouble, or if they ask what is wrong, Korolard now tells them.

> "Last night, Lingus's son disappeared and 'tis likely that he will never be heard from again. Erowyn must have been coming home late from the inn, taking a short cut through a field. His tracks through the snow come to an end, there in the field, but Erowyn himself was gone. Lingus found only his son's cap nearby. The year of the demon has begun, and no one will be safe until the winter ends and . . ." He pauses, peering around the familiar village dolefully, then finishes, ". . . and two more have died. It always takes three before going."



If the PCs do not offer to help, Korolard bids them good day and enters the tavern to tell everyone the sad news. If the PCs do offer to help, read the following aloud to the players:

> Korolard at first looks pleased, but he quickly frowns and says, "The demon-spirit is a part of our village. And though a sad one, 'tis an unavoidable plague we live with. You would do well to leave it alone; it'd be safer. Besides, Marcella is the only one who knows 'bout it, and she says it has to be so. Well, I have to go



warn the rest of the village, but I wish you luck and good hunting in whatever you do."

Korolard will answer any further questions as best he can and will gladly direct the PCs to Marcella, the village wisewoman. When he's told the adventurers all he can, he bids them good day and heads over to the tavern.

Marcella is a farmer's widow who is proficient in herbalism and village folklore. She learned much of her lore as a young girl from her great aunt. Marcella is now 56 years old and is the wisewoman/healer for the entire village (the closest cleric lives 12 miles away). She is very curious and impatient to learn all that she can about life. This creates an initial impression of abruptness, but her demeanor softens as she begins telling or listening to a tale.

Marcella: AL LN; AC 10; MV 9; 0-level human; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 10; staff.

Before telling the legend of the demon-spirit, Marcella questions the party about where they were born, why they are adventurers, and why they want to know about the evil being that plagues Trellmont. She is pessimistic about their chance of success at killing it and must be given a good reason for spending her time talking to them about it. Money can be placed in a jar near the door, but coins alone will not convince her to tell them very much. A genuine and evident desire to learn, an offer to relate an interesting legend in exchange, or an offer of a service in return for the telling (she will have them chop wood to help out Lingus) will convince her to speak. However, if the PCs use any force, including threats, she will ask them to leave.

If Marcella can be convinced to relate the story, the DM should feel free to interrupt the telling often with Marcella's personal questions about the PCs. The wisewoman is interested in learning as much about the adventurer's lives as possible.

When she is ready to tell her story, Marcella sits down with her legs crossed and gestures for the party to sit in a half circle around her. Then she begins:

The Legend of the Demon-Spirit

"Since the dawning of the world, my young ones, spirits have roamed all over the lands. Many are amenable to sacrifice, and it is these that I keep at bay. Others can be called upon when there is need by employing the proper rituals. Yet some are perversions of nature, unnatural beings that cannot be controlled except by the greatest of magic workers. The demon-spirit of this village is such a one, and unfortunately my humble talents are not a match for its strong will.

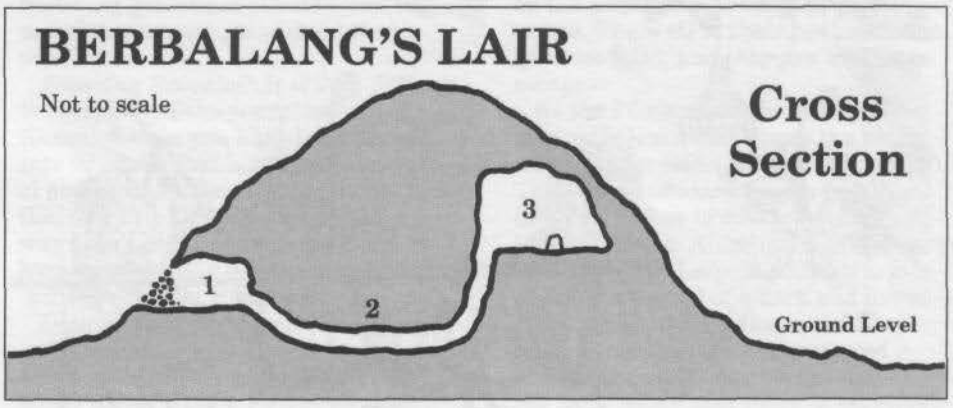
"Every nine winters, during the full moon of each of the three months of cold, the demon-spirit awakens and hunts those who brave the dangers of the night. Having killed, the demon-spirit sleeps until the next full moon. After the demon-spirit has claimed three young men, it is satiated and dreams three years for each of the lives stolen.

"For unknown to many, this spirit seeks to relive the life that it feels was unfairly stolen from it. Killed as a young herdsman, the spirit would not travel on but was determined to live among flesh and blood. And so it hunts young men to give it another chance, though fleeting, at living."

Marcella pauses to look all of you over, then says, "Well, if you're determined to hunt it out, good luck. All I can tell you is that I once sheltered a young girl who had lost her husband to this spirit. She told me that she saw it flying in the direction of the stream, going deeper into the hills up north. Now, spirits often live under pools of water, and this one's horrible enough to have a lake, so you might find it there, but don't blame me if you don't. Despite what some mean folks think, it's not my fault this thing's picked our village. It's just the way of life."

Marcella will answer any other questions as best she can, but she has told all that she knows about the demon-spirit. If asked whether anyone has confronted the demon before, she struggles to remember. After a short while of thinking hard, Marcella tells the PCs about Olthair.

"Olthair was a good-hearted farmer who was once a soldier. It is said that, when the demon-spirit came back a second time during his life, Olthair got up one night, put on his old armor, and told his daughter he was going to rid the world of at least one evil. His only living relative, his young daughter, left for the city a few years after that night. Olthair was never heard from again." Marcella bows her head sadly, then says, "I wish you all of the luck that the gods will grant."



Unless the PCs have more questions, Marcella shoos them outside, locks the door behind her, and walks off to collect herbs. By this time, Korolard has gone home, so it is up to the PCs to decide what to do next. The mayor will gladly talk with them, but he knows nothing that Marcella has not already told the party.

The Berbalang's Lair

The journey through the hills, covered in light snow, will not cause the PCs any trouble, since the still-flowing stream that Marcella mentioned will keep them from getting lost. However, the cave entrance to the berbalang's lair is not obvious. The stream now springs up from the hill next to where the berbalang has hid its body, but it once came from the berbalang's hill. There is a 25% chance of immediately noticing the dried-up stream bed, while a short search of the area will always reveal it. By pursuing the dry stream bed, the PCs learn that it ends in an 8′ pile of rubble. Dwarves and gnomes will instantly recognize that this is not a natural pile; all other characters who study it may make an intelligence check on 1d20 to grasp that the rocks could not have slid down from above.

In order to clear the entire entrance hidden by the rocks, the PCs will have to spend at least three hours laboring to remove the large bottom boulders. The top 3′ of the pile, however, can be rolled off with a good push from anyone with a strength of 13 or better. At most, one person can push from the top of the hill while another pushes from the side (thereby allowing them to combine their strengths). It will take one round for each PC to clamber through the opening if both hands are free and three rounds if the PC is holding something in a hand, such as a sword or torch.

As noted in the *Monstrous Compendium*, the berbalang forms a duplicate of itself once per month while it is in a trance state. This duplicate, called a projection, hunts for prey within three miles of its lair during the full moon. Normally, after killing a victim, the berbalang's projection removes the top 3′ of rock, dumps the remains in the area beyond, then flies outside and replaces the rocks. Having done this, the berbalang dissipates its projection.

In addition to hiding the entrance, the rocks clatter loudly when moved, thus alerting the creature that something has found its lair. The berbalang will be in the deathlike trance state that is normal for its kind, its spirit roaming the Astral plane while its body rests, immobile. If sound reaches the berbalang's body, its conscious spirit hears it and immediately begins the journey from the Astral plane back to its body, taking 1-20 rounds for each day that has elapsed since Erowyn's death. Most PC parties will reach the lair on the day after Erowyn was killed, so allowing 15 rounds before the berbalang returns to its body gives the group a chance at an easy victory. The DM should keep careful track of the time, starting from when the berbalang is alerted, in order to determine whether it has returned by the time the PCs find its body.

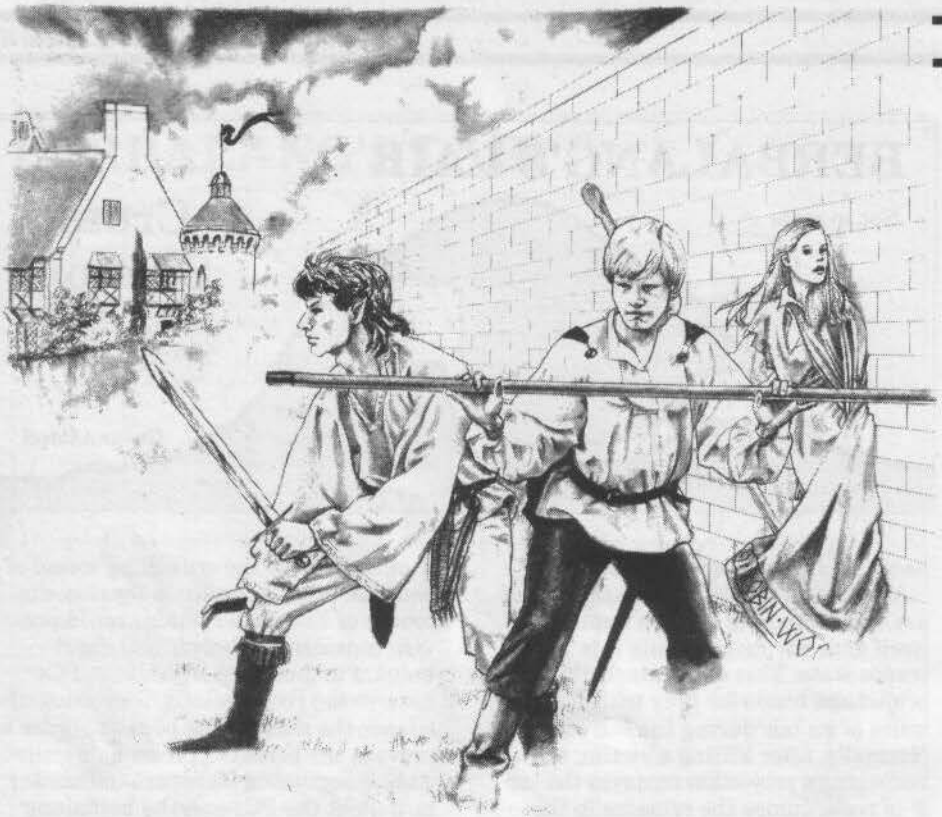
1. Entrance Cavern. This naturally formed limestone cavern is about 5′ wide and 12′ long, with an 8′ ceiling. The floor is covered with brittle human bones, shredded rotting cloth, and a number of coins. The partially eaten body of a human male (Erowyn) lies here as well, greatly mutilated but preserved by the cold. As the PCs move around in this small cavern, the DM should describe the crunching sound of bones in order to build up tension; discovery of Erowyn's remains could provide considerable horror and shock value. Furthermore, even if the PCs remove the rocks quietly, they must also silence the noise of the bones in order to prevent the berbalang from being alerted and beginning its return (no matter how quiet the PCs are, the berbalang will always know when someone is within 5′ of its body).

The treasure that lies scattered about the room consists of 1,718 cp, 221 sp, 40 gp; a 75-gp onyx, a 20-gp moss agate, two 17-gp turquoises, a 10-gp tiger-eye agate, a 10-gp malachite, and a 7-gp blue quartz crystal. While most of the berbalang's victims are poor villagers, it has occasionally preyed on travelers, and it is from these victims that most of the treasure lying scattered about was collected. The berbalang does not care about losing the treasure; it leaves the treasure in this room to distract unwary explorers who find its lair.

If the party stops to collect all of the treasure, this takes 10 turns minus one turn for every person collecting treasure, though it will always take at least one turn. If the berbalang's spirit returns to its body during this time, its projection forms about 100′ directly over the entrance. The projection then silently flies down and attacks the party with a −2 penalty on the PCs' chance to avoid surprise, unless a guard has been stationed next to the opening to the inner lair (see area 3 for the berbalang's combat tactics).

Two rounds of searching will locate a 3½′ opening in the floor at the back of the cavern. Any human-sized creature can crawl through this hole, except those wearing plate mail or full plate.

Continued on page 76



BANE OF THE SHADOWBORN

BY WILLIAM W. CONNORS

A good deed never goes unpunished in Ravenloft.

Artwork by Robin Wood

William Connors has worked as a freelance game designer and editor for many years. Two years ago, he accepted a position with TSR and was promptly bitten by the Ravenloft bug. He edited RA1 Feast of Goblyns *(the first RAVENLOFT™ module), designed the MC10* Monstrous Compendium, *RAVENLOFT Appendix, and is hard at work on other frightening projects even as you read this.*

Bill writes: "By the time this adventure is printed, it will have been played at several conventions in both the United States and Europe. My special thanks go to Blake Mobley, who was kind enough to referee it for me at the GEN CON® European game fair, and to all the players at all the conventions who provided me with valuable help in the design of this adventure."

"Bane of the Shadowborn" is an AD&D® RAVENLOFT adventure for 4-6 adventurers of 6th-9th level (about 37 total levels). It is open to all classes, races, and alignments. However, it is strongly recommended that all character alignments be other than evil, and one of the characters, preferably a lawful-good cleric or paladin, should be a relative of Lady Shadowborn, a deceased NPC (see "The Chosen One" for details). Spell-casting abilities are a definite bonus, and a magical fire spell is essential to the success of the adventure (see "The Final Key" and "The Four Keys").

This adventure can be played without the RAVENLOFT boxed set, but Dungeon Masters who use background material from the boxed set will be able to capture more of the Gothic horror flavor that sets RAVENLOFT games apart from traditional AD&D games. One monster comes from the *Monster Manual II*.

The major antagonist in this adventure, the intelligent sword Ebonbane (see sidebar), appears in RR1 *Darklords*, a 96-page RAVENLOFT campaign accessory.

The Demiplane of Ravenloft

For those readers not familiar with the RAVENLOFT boxed set, the following overview of the domain of dread is included. While it is by no means a replacement for the boxed set, it should provide a sense of mood and a better understanding of the setting in which this adventure takes place.

The Land

The demiplane Ravenloft is not of this world or any other. It exists as an island unto itself. It is a solid, physical dimension within the Ethereal plane, and it follows its own mystical set of laws.

Ravenloft is not stable. Over time, its lands can expand, condense, coalesce, or disappear. It is usually smaller than realms in the Prime Material plane, such as Krynn and the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, but unlike them, Ravenloft has no fixed size. In fact, it appears to move as well as change shape. It floats about in the Ethereal plane, extending its misty fingers into other worlds and planes, to absorb characters as well as land.

The Mists

The Core lands and the islands of terror that surround it are adrift in an unending sea of wafting fog. Known as the Mists, this shroud seems to form the barrier of the demiplane. Movement through the Mists is utterly unpredictable and impossible to track.

Lords and Their Domains

The most evil of the creatures and beings drawn into Ravenloft are given the status of lords, and each is given a domain to rule over. While a domain is utterly under its lord's control, it is also its lord's prison. Each of the lords lives with his own curse or pain. As in Dante's *Inferno,* the punishment the lord must endure usually matches the evil he has done.

Putting aside their own sufferings, though, the lords are powerful creatures. The Dark Powers that confine them have also made them almost invincible. In short, the lord of a domain is virtually unstoppable when in his own realm. Their powers, which were often great in their original universe, have been greatly magnified. Even a party of high-level adventurers has little chance of defeating a lord in direct combat.

Magic in Ravenloft

The demiplane of Ravenloft has an unsettling effect on most magic-using characters. Spells that have served them well and faithfully in the past will not function here as they did before. Although the RAVENLOFT boxed set details specific variations on spells, the following guidelines should allow the use of this adventure without that product.

Escaping Ravenloft: It is very difficult to escape from the demiplane of Ravenloft once you have been drawn into it. Spells that normally allow travel across dimensions simply do not function there. In this adventure, there is no way for a party to escape the Shadowborn estate by the use of normal magic, until they defeat Ebonbane.

Detecting evil: In a land as mysterious as Ravenloft, spells designed to detect either good or evil do not work. Such spells reveal whether something is lawful or chaotic, but they never tell the caster more than that.

Divination: On the whole, divination spells are less reliable and far more cryptic in Ravenloft. The DM should make sure that the party is never quite certain that the information they have received is true. For example: "Your *detect snares and pits* spell indicates that this region of the forest is safe to move through, but there seemed to be something unusual about the way it felt when you cast it. It's nothing you can put your finger on, but it fills your mind with doubts as to the spell's accuracy."

Necromancy: Many spells that have an evil or dark nature to them (mainly necromantic spells) actually work a little better in Ravenloft than they do in the outside worlds. However, there is a price to pay for their use (see the RAVENLOFT boxed set rulebook, page 17, "The Powers Check").

For the Dungeon Master

The events detailed in this adventure have their origins several centuries before the births of the player characters. Although the PCs do not know it at the start of the game, they have been fated to appear in Ravenloft at this particular time and place. The reason for this is simple: One of the PCs is directly related to Lady Kateri Shadowborn, former lord of this domain (see "The Chosen One").

The adventure begins when the PCs are transported from their home world (be it the FORGOTTEN REALMS, WORLD OF GREYHAWK®, DRAGONLANCE®, or another campaign setting) into the dark demiplane of Ravenloft. Once there, they encounter a vast wall that is not solid. Passing through the wall, they find themselves on the grounds of the Shadowborn estate. The wall to their backs suddenly turns solid, and they are unable to escape.

As the PCs explore the estate, they gradually learn that it was the home of a beautiful woman (Lady Shadowborn). The party will also discover that Shadowborn Manor is now something of a haunted house. Although it is still home to the spirit of Lady Shadowborn, it is under the control of a dark and powerful magical artifact, the sword Ebonbane. A number of clues scattered around the estate will reveal that there are four "keys" that must be obtained to destroy the evil sword and free the spirit of Lady Shadowborn from her suffering and torment. Each key is based on one of the four elements: air, earth, fire, and water. While the PCs gather the pieces of the puzzle, they must overcome the twisted wards and guardians that the sword has positioned around the manor to protect itself. If the PCs are able to defeat Ebonbane and free the lady of the estate from her dreadful curse, they will be returned to their original campaign world.

The Death of Lady Shadowborn

Four hundred and twenty years ago, there lived a noble and proud paladin named Kateri Shadowborn. She was born to a wealthy family but found a comfort in the service of her church that she could never seem to acquire elsewhere. As her dedication to her faith grew, she began to see that enemies of her beliefs were everywhere. Never one to shy away from a difficult challenge, she took up arms and went to war with the enemies of truth and justice.

Over the years, her labors brought her fame, happiness, and a fair degree of wealth. Because of her holy vow of poverty, most of the spoils of her campaigns went into the coffers of her church or to serve the needs of families less fortunate than her own. When she grew older, she retired from her warrior's ways and settled down to live out the rest of her life on her ancestral estate, in a land far safer thanks to her flashing steel.

As the years went by, Lady Shadowborn's enemies began to plot against her again. Because she no longer needed to defend herself on a regular basis, Lady Shadowborn became complacent in her autumn years. Then, without warning,

a foul scheme was set into motion by the mightiest of dark forces. It was decided that this single woman was so important a symbol for her faith that she must be brought down. Thus, Ebonbane was forged.

Crafted by the evil servants of a dark god, Ebonbane carried within it the life force of a malevolent being whose name was best never spoken by man. When the final rune was set into the slender black blade and Ebonbane was at last completed, the servants of the dark god began to weave a powerful spell of control over the evil artifact. They had no idea, however, of the power of this dark thing that had been called by their summoning magicks. Their spell was turned back upon them, and they found themselves transformed into unquestioning slaves of the evil Ebonbane.

While their attempt to bind the thing that is now Ebonbane failed, the sword's creators did manage to implant a great hatred for Lady Shadowborn in its foul soul. Now in control of the men who would have mastered it, Ebonbane set about devising its own plan for the destruction of Lady Shadowborn. Once the paladin was dead, the sword felt, its evil could spread throughout the land. Ebonbane arranged to be found by one of Shadowborn's oldest and most trusted friends, a monk at a nearby monastery. Lashing out with its titanic will, Ebonbane destroyed the monk's spirit and took over his body. The foul plan was underway.

Using the shell of the monk as a disguise, Ebonbane went to visit the aging paladin and delivered the sword to her. Explaining that the sword had been found in the crypts beneath the abbey, Ebonbane pretended to need her advice on dealing with the ancient weapon. As soon as she began to examine the sword, the nature of the trap became obvious to her. By then, of course, it was too late.

The battle that followed was titanic. In the end, Ebonbane won and Lady Shadowborn was slain by her own sword. The great energies released in this conflict and the enormity of Ebonbane's darkness could not help but draw the attention of the Dark Powers of Ravenloft. Sensing that the creature imprisoned in this dark sword was wholly evil, they decided to pull it into Ravenloft and add the monster to their "collection" of the diabolical. Thus, as the battle drew to a close, a wall of fog swept in around the estate and consumed it. By the time Ebonbane delivered its deathblow to the valiant paladin, there were no traces of Shadowborn Manor left on the grounds where it had once stood.

Lady Kateri Shadowborn (in life): AL LG; AC −2; MV 9; P12; hp 87; THAC0 9; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA/SD as per paladin; ML 18; S 17, D 16, C 16, I 12, W 16, Ch 17.

Lady Shadowborn wore *plate mail +2*, carried a nonmagical shield, and wielded a broad sword that was, in fact, a *holy avenger* (her magical items no longer survive; see area 16). While these statistics play no part in this adventure, the DM may find them useful in setting up sequels and spin-off adventures (see "Concluding the Adventure"). It might also be possible for the PCs to *resurrect* Lady Shadowborn at some point in the future if a cleric of the appropriate level is available (that is up to the DM), but for now her soul cannot escape the prison of Ebonbane's domain.

Ebonbane

Ebonbane was crafted of a special *cursed* iron brought into the world from another plane. In that realm, the metal was far less powerful than it is in Ravenloft. Like all of the evil things drawn into Ravenloft by the Dark Powers, Ebonbane's power has been greatly enhanced. The following information details Ebonbane's abilities when in its domain in Ravenloft.

Ebonbane's blade is deepest ebony and has been set with runes of purest evil. These act as *symbols* (of whatever type Ebonbane wishes); each *symbol* can be activated once per day. This weapon has all the powers of a *vorpal sword +4* and a *flame tongue,* as well as being able to move about on its own (MV 9) and attack by an innate form of *levitation* (at man height).

Ebonbane has an intelligence and ego of 17, is chaotic evil, and can communicate by both speech and telepathy. It can attack once per round with a THAC0 of 10, inflicting a base 1-8 hp damage. Anyone who tries to attack Ebonbane will find that it is AC −10 and can be harmed by only magical spells and +3 or better weapons. Any successful spell or weapon attack against it scores 1 hp damage (regardless of what that attack would normally inflict). After 10 hits are inflicted, Ebonbane must make a saving throw as appropriate for the type of attack used. If the sword fails its throw, it breaks up and is destroyed. If it makes the roll, it is unharmed, and an additional 10 hits must be scored before it must save again. Multiple attacks from a single source (like a volley of *magic missiles)* count as only a single attack in fighting Ebonbane.

Ebonbane controls the weather about Shadowborn Manor, generating any effect the DM wishes from lightning to wind storms. It can also *command blades* (any sword or dagger, including artifacts) to animate and attack people (THAC0 10, damage by weapon type); innate powers of such swords function (such as *vorpal* or *life stealing* powers), but triggered powers do not (e.g., *sunray* or *wish*-casting powers). Like all lords in Ravenloft, Ebonbane is the absolute master of all that transpires in its own domain. If it wants the walls of the manor house to bleed, they bleed; if it wishes pillars of stone to rise up out of the earth, then they arise.

Each round that a person grasps Ebonbane's hilt and attempts to wield it in combat, the "Weapons Versus Characters" rules on page 188 in the *DMG* should be consulted. If the wielder is dominated by Ebonbane, his spirit is instantly consumed and Ebonbane controls the ex-PC's body (this does not happen to those struck by the blade). *Resurrection* of the PC is now impossible. Such a body acts like a zombielike zero-level human under the control of the sword (death follows in 2-7 days). If the PC is not dominated, he may use the weapon as a *vorpal blade* and *flame tongue.*

Being an unnatural creature, Ebonbane sustains itself by drawing off the life energies of living creatures in its domain. All animal life has perished around Shadowborn Manor as a result. Nonmagical healing cannot take place; spells, psionics, or magical items must be used to recover from wounds suffered here.

This material expands upon that in the RR1 *Darklords* RAVENLOFT accessory, pages 28-35.

Ebonbane in Ravenloft

When it was transported to Ravenloft, Shadowborn Manor and its new master joined the islands of terror that surround the Core. Although still a part of this nefarious demiplane of dread, the manor is cut off from the rest of Ravenloft by an endless sea of turbulent fog. There is no entrance or exit from this place now without the aid and blessings of the Mists themselves.

Ebonbane knows that it is trapped. There is nothing it longs for more than the chance to escape the walls that surround Shadowborn Manor and return to the world it came from. Once there, its years of suffering in solitude would end in a wild spree of death and darkness, the likes of which its world has never known. This will never be—but the PCs and Lady Shadowborn do not know that.

Further, Ebonbane knows that Lady Shadowborn has escaped death and become an undead spirit haunting his domain of evil. Try as the sword may to destroy her, she seems to cling to "life," refusing to rest in peace and constantly serving to remind Ebonbane that it is no better off for her death.

When the PCs enter this domain, Ebonbane sees them as something of a diversion. It imagines that it will be fun to torment them and, in the end, kill them all in horrible ways. And it will make every attempt to do so.

Lady Shadowborn in Ravenloft

Lady Shadowborn, even in her final hour, was an undaunted warrior against the forces of evil. When it became clear that she was going to lose her duel with the *cursed* blade, she bent her will toward a longer-range goal. Invoking the considerable energy of her faith, she swore a holy oath that her battle would not end that day. Rather, she vowed to remain in this world in whatever form she could so that her battle might continue. Thus, when Ebonbane's deathblow fell, her eternal spirit stayed behind to torment him in the form of a greater geist—a form of ghost detailed in the RAVENLOFT boxed set. For those playing this adventure without that product, the exact abilities and limitations of the geist are not important, as all encounters with Lady Shadowborn are handled as described in this text.

Lady Shadowborn has never learned that her estate is no longer on the world where it was built. As she is unable to leave the confines of her house, she is unaware of the mysterious Mists or the dark stone wall that circles the grounds. In fact, her mind is unable to know these things due to the influence of the Dark Powers of Ravenloft. Any attempt to explain this (or related matters) to her spirit is doomed to failure.

Shortly after her time as a geist began, Lady Shadowborn was able to use the last of her fading clerical powers to cast a series of *augury* spells. Because of this, she knows that a member of her family will arrive at the estate one day to confront the evil of Ebonbane. With her guidance, Lady Shadowborn hopes, this brave soul will be able to defeat the evil weapon and free her from this place.

The Chosen One

Before the beginning of this adventure, the DM should decide which of the PCs is to be related to Lady Shadowborn. The ideal candidate for such a role is another paladin or a lawful-good priest. In either case, the DM should note the religion of the PC and use that faith as Lady Shadowborn's (this is important at several points in the adventure).

Throughout the course of the game, the DM should take steps to gradually convey the fact that there is a link between Lady Shadowborn and the selected character. By the end of the game, it should be possible for the player to deduce that his PC is, in fact, some relation to Lady Shadowborn.

With this in mind, the PC might well seek out previously unknown relations on his home world when this adventure ends. The DM is free to handle this as he desires but can always avoid the issue by stating that no trace of any other family members can be found.

Arrival in Ravenloft

To Sleep . . .

The DM can begin this adventure at any place or time, but the majority of the party must be asleep. While the PCs could be in any location, from a roadside trench to the floor of a bar to a cozy inn, it is best if the place is somewhere that the party feels safe and comfortable. Their own chambers on the grounds of their own estate (if they have one) is best. In any event, make it seem as if things couldn't be safer when they bed down for the night.

If anyone remains awake (on watch, cursed with insomnia, or for some other reason), he finds himself growing sleepy and gradually slipping into slumber. Even PCs normally resistant or immune to *sleep* spells cannot escape the power of the Mists of Ravenloft.

As the last of the PCs falls asleep, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> The last thing you notice before your eyes close for the night is a thin veil of fog swirling in the air about you. There is something chilling in the mist, but you cannot force your mind to focus on what that might be. Unable to do more than give a mental shrug, you close your eyes and darkness settles upon you.

. . . Perchance to Dream

While most of the PCs pass the night in a dreamless and restful slumber, one of them will not. This PC, the descendant of Lady Shadowborn, experiences an unusual and vivid dream. The DM should go out of his way to make certain that the dream seems like reality to the PC. The DM may want to isolate the player running the dreaming character from his fellow adventurers while this scene is resolved, but that isn't strictly necessary. The dream runs as follows:

> You seem to be having a difficult time waking up this morning. Opening your eyes requires as much effort as lifting a heavy stone. When, at last, you are able to awaken, you find that things are not as they were when you went to sleep.
>
> You have awakened on a couch in a grand room, obviously the entry hall to a large estate. Paintings and other works of art decorate the entire room, giving it an air of graceful elegance. Sunlight beams in through large windows of fine glass, scattering the floor with a mosaic of bright patches. Freshly cut flowers stand in various places around the hall, filling the room with a soft fragrance that reminds you of expensive perfume.
>
> Your companions are curled up on the floor at various places around the

room. Each of them is sleeping peacefully and looks quite comfortable despite the fact that the floor beneath them is built of hard wood.

Just as you finish taking in this scene, a loud knock echoes from the large double doors that must lead to the outside. The blow to the door is so loud that it reverberates like thunder through the room.

The adventurer is free to explore the room (area 2 of Shadowborn Manor) at his leisure. The DM should use his judgment here and remember that this is just what it seems to be: part of a grand old house. Everything in the room is of the finest quality and in perfect condition.

Any attempts at waking the other PCs will fail. They take no notice of anything the PC does, even striking or moving them. Remember, this is a dream and they are just a part of it.

If the PC decides to open a door—either the eastern one in response to the knocking or one of the western ones—the entire scene changes.

As you start to open the door, it seems to take on a life of its own. With a sudden fury, it bursts inward and you are thrown backward. A gale of cold wind, heavy with the odor of corruption and decay one might expect to find in a slaughterhouse, rushes into the room.

You cast a reflexive glance over your shoulder at your companions, only to find that their bodies have begun to whither like corpses with the passage of time. In less than a second, as a howling laughter fills the room with its evil echoes, they are nothing more than shriveled, mummified remains.

A single figure stands in the doorway. Although he wears the robes and symbols one might associate with a holy man, there is a wild look in his eyes. Clutched in one hand is a slender sword with a gleaming black blade. An aura of darkness seems to surround the man and his weapon as he advances toward you, raising the dark sword to strike.

The DM should allow the PC to use whatever weapons or spells he wishes in his battle with this phantasm. Every blow that the PC lands should be described as a mighty one, but there should be no apparent damage done. Conversely, every attack made by the holy man with the sword will hit and inflict 1d10+5 hp damage—damage that is real only in the dream. Remember that this is a nightmare, and nothing the PC does will allow him to escape from it or win this fight. When the final blow falls, read the text below:

The grinning figure slashes his sword downward, and you feel the burning sting of its blade. Your knees grow weak and you fall forward, gasping for the breath that you know will be your last . . . and suddenly you sit up screaming.

Your body is soaked in sweat, and your heart is pounding in your chest. The roar of your pulse in your ears is so intense that you fear it may drive you mad. The evil warrior, the black sword, and the rich manor house were nothing but a horrible dream.

In the Mists

Once the nightmare scene has been played out, the PCs will all awaken in a swirling region of mists. Just as the DM should have played the above scene as if it were reality and not a dream, this scene should be played as if it might be a dream. Liberal use of phrases like "the mist *appears* to be common fog" and "nothing unusual *seems* to be happening" will serve to keep the players guessing. The following boxed text, to be read to all players, sets the stage for this scene:

You have awakened in a strange and unfamiliar place. All around you are boiling clouds of fog and drifting walls of mist. Try as you might, you can see no solid objects except for the other members of your party. Stomping your feet to see what lies beneath them reveals no solid surface. You seem to be standing in a cloud.

From time to time, a dark shadow seems to pass by at the absolute end of your range of vision. Thus, it is impossible to tell whether these disturbances are caused by physical creatures or if they are simple eddies in the turbulent vapor.

Nothing the PCs do will have any affect on the Mists, and the Mists will have no adverse affects on them. As soon as the PCs move away from the spot in which they awaken, they discover a stone wall.

Outside the Wall

You have come across a stone wall standing in the mists. It vanishes into the curling wisps of fog, not only to the left and right but straight up as far as you can see, making it impossible to tell how long or tall it might be. Directly in front of you, the mists wash up against the stones in a way that reminds you of waves slapping gently against a seawall.

Any means of examining the wall without touching it reveals nothing. Magical spells intended to open portals in the wall or divine its nature will also fail, for this is no mere wall of stone and rock—it is the mystical border of a domain of Ravenloft. As such, it is an extension of the Dark Powers themselves and cannot be affected by anything short of divine intervention.

If someone gets up the nerve to touch the wall in any way (including attempts

to listen for sounds beyond it, searching for secret doors, and so forth), he discovers that it is not solid. Any object can pass through the wall as if the barrier were nothing more than the churning mists around it. The drawback is that an object inserted into the wall cannot be withdrawn. Thus, if a staff is used to touch the wall, it will sink several inches into the wall before the PC is aware that the surface is not solid. Once this happens, the staff cannot be pulled back out of the wall. The same holds true for bodies, so someone touching the wall finds himself "glued" to it.

Any object, even one already stuck in the wall, can pass into the wall without resistance. Thus, the only way for a stuck PC to escape the bonds of this phantom wall is for him to walk through it. Anyone doing so moves to the next encounter, "Within the Wall."

Within the Wall

> You stand in an area of absolute darkness. The smell of cold stone is heavy in the air, and the chill of the mists still cuts into your flesh, but all light is smothered. A constant grinding sound, as if two rough stones were being slowly rubbed together, can be heard. In fact, the more you listen to the grinding, the more regular it seems to become until, at last, it could easily be mistaken for a continuous series of rasping breaths.

PCs within the wall are not in any danger, but they will be unable to undertake any meaningful actions. They can move neither backward nor left nor right, only straight ahead into the wall. Spell-casting in this region will always fail, and no attempt to create any form of light will succeed. Once the PCs have started to pass through the wall, the only thing they can do is complete their journey.

Inside the Estate

Once the PCs decide to leave the darkness of the wall, they find themselves standing in a place unlike the mists they left behind. In fact, it looks almost homey.

> You stand on the grounds of a lush estate surrounded by the strange stone wall. Thick green grass stretches away over a high rolling hill, spotted here and there with copses of thick, ancient trees. The sky overhead is bright and sunny, showing no sign of the fog you saw on the other side of the wall.
>
> A curious cobblestone path seems to emerge from the stone wall near you and run along to a sprawling white manor house standing atop the hill. This is a grand building with tall spires, a collection of lightning rods, and windows that catch the light from the noonday sun and toss it back as a beautiful splash of color. Complimenting this splendid sight are the sweet scent of flowers and the kiss of a cool breeze on your faces.

Attempts to step into the wall from this side have no effect. Magical means to bypass the barrier will fail, although they might appear to work at first. If, for example, a wizard casts a *passwall* spell, he can enter the wall but steps out of it onto the estate grounds again.

Anyone who tries to climb the wall finds that he never seems to reach the top. Although the wall appears to be only 15′ tall, it cannot be climbed. All attempts fail in some way. After all, this is the barrier of a domain of Ravenloft, not a common stone wall.

Wandering around the grounds reveals nothing of great interest to the party. The estate is in good condition and seems to have been kept in excellent repair.

There are only two unusual things that can be learned without entering the manor itself. The first that there is a complete absence of any form of animal life within the wall. This is apparent on every level: no insects, no birds, no rodents, nothing.

If some amount of time is spent away from the manor house, the second thing that will become obvious is that the sun does not move across the sky. So long as the PCs do not approach the manor, it will remain "noon." When the PCs do decide to move closer to the house, the sun sets rapidly. Thus, by the time the party reaches the end of the cobblestone path or comes close to the outer wall of the building, it will be sunset. This happens whether one PC or the entire party moves toward the manor, which lies 100 yards from the surounding wall.

> As you approach the house, a strange transformation occurs. The bright sun is gradually cloaked by thick black clouds as it begins to drift down to the horizon. A thin mist of rain begins to fall, coating you in a fine, oily spray that mixes with an increasingly chilly breeze to make your teeth chatter and your flesh crawl. By the time you are near the house, slender forks of lightning have begun to dance across the sky, providing momentary flashes of illumination and creating a continuous rumbling cacophony.
>
> A look at the manor house reveals that it, too, has changed with the sinking sun. The windows have all grown gray with age and are laced with weblike fractures and cracks. The paint is peeling away from the rotting timber of the walls, and many of the spires are cracked and partially collapsed. Vines have grown over portions of the house, choking off some windows and making it look as if the entire place had been snared in some crawling, evil net.

The Estate

Eventually, the PCs should enter the estate. While most will simply want to use the front door and archway (area 1), others may wish to break into the house. With a few exceptions, this is perfectly acceptable.

Although none of the windows open normally, they could be broken and used to gain entrance to the house. This works in every case on either the first or second floor. The PCs can also leave the mansion at any time by simply diving out a window. Climbing the stone wall around the garden (this is *not* the wall that marks the border of the domain) allows access to alternate entrances like the greenhouse (area 14), garden porch (area 15), or gallery (area 6). In addition, PCs who enter through the garden might also stumble across the mausoleum entrance (area 17). Finally, scaling the wooden fence around the kitchen yard (area 19) is also possible and might allow access to the outhouses (area 20), the garden, or the manor itself.

Any spells used to transport PCs into the estate always fail. The house is resistant to such magical violations. A

wizard casting a *passwall* spell, for example, finds the side of the building as solid as it ever was when he attempts to move through it. Attempts to use magical means of divination to learn about the interior of the building also fail.

The following entries detail what the PCs will encounter as they explore Shadowborn Manor. Throughout their investigation of the house, they will be carefully watched by both Ebonbane and the spirit of Lady Shadowborn.

1. The Archway.

Your party stands under an archway just outside the front door to the manor house. Two sturdy wooden doors offer admission to the manor, but the hinges are rusted and look as if decades have passed since they were last used. A tarnished metal plate bearing the words "Shadowborn Manor" has been set into one of the doors.

As you take in these sights, a blinding flash of lightning in the sky behind you throws your long shadows across the doors. As darkness returns, a mighty crash of thunder makes the ground beneath your feet tremble. The air carries the bitter odor of electricity, and a heavy rain begins to fall. Only the protection of the archway prevents you from being instantly drenched.

Nothing unusual will happen to the party members until they attempt to open the doors. As soon as one of them does so (either by reaching for the latch, checking to see if the door is trapped, etc.), they will be confronted with an apparition.

Lady Shadowborn, in an attempt to both warn the party that danger is ahead and beg the PCs to help her, causes an image of herself to appear before them. Ebonbane, seeking to prevent contact between the two, uses its own powers to "jam" this communication. The scene runs as follows:

As you near the door, the splinters and cracks in its surface seem to flow like water. They form into a woman's face, similar to the figurehead on a ship. The features of the woman are soft and kind, radiating a sort of innocence. The mouth, however, is set in a grim and determined expression. As you watch, the eyes open. Slowly, as if with great difficulty, the mysterious face begins to speak.

"I am Lady Shadowborn, defender of the faith and warrior of the church. You have come here at my behest to aid me in my time of need."

Before the ghostly woman can complete her message, she seems to lose her voice. A look of alarm come over her face and a sudden, horrific transformations occurs. The transparent flesh of the ghostly woman begins to darken and change. In seconds, you see what can only be the image of a face rotting away as it lies in a grave. In the end, all that remains is a withered, mummified death mask with burning pinpoints of cold red light for eyes.

"Before you enter my home," the monstrous face hisses, "you must know that you are going to die!" As it fades from sight, the corrupted mouth cracks open wider, and a hideous echoing laughter fills the air. Although it quickly fades away with the image of the face, it seems that the twisted cackling lingers on like some persistent disease.

2. Entrance Hall.

You have entered a large entrance hall that must, at one time, have been a fine and elegant place. As you look around it now, you are strongly reminded that no work of man can stand against the ravages of time. A large stained-glass window on the southern wall is laced with a spider's web of fine fractures, causing it to break the gray light falling through it into a cold mosaic on the moldering remains of what once must have been a fine Oriental rug. The remains of various pieces of furniture—a broken couch, an assortment of once comfortable-looking chairs, a tall coat rack, and a half-collapsed

The Final Key

Only three of the four keys that are needed to destroy Ebonbane are to be found on the grounds of the estate. These are the keys of water (from area 8), air (from area 18), and earth (from area 22). As soon as the third key is recovered, Lady Shadowborn contacts the party and tries to make clear to them the nature of the final key. Because of Ebonbane's power, she is unable to reveal this information to them directly but must hint at it. The following text describes this scene:

As soon as you take the third key into your hands, a cold wind begins to sweep around your party. It slowly begins to sparkle as if with the dust of a thousand powdered gems and forms into the image of Lady Shadowborn. She appears to be floating several inches above the ground and looks down on your band with an elegant smile.

"You have done well, my chosen ones. Through wit and wisdom you have won three of the four keys. All that remains is the final key. But it is not to be found among my things. Rather, the final key burns inside you, if you have but the knowledge and the gift to set it free. The final key is composed of many things; sometimes it is born of flint and oil, while others have called it forth with sulphur and dung. Whatever form it takes, only its power can bring down he who torments me. Only when all the keys are presented to Ebonbane and made into one can that which was forged be undone. May the blessings of the gods stand with you as you face this evil thing."

With that, the image fades slowly away, and the room is as it was. Outside, the storm rages into new fury, as if this visitation has offended it in some way.

If the meaning of the above conversation (that some form of magical fire must be used to engulf or destroy the first three keys) escapes the PCs, spells like *augury* or *divination* can be used to make matters clearer. The DM is also free to introduce other clues to make things more obvious to those who cannot grasp the meaning of this riddle.

desk—are scattered about the room.

Outside, the intense storm seems to have increased in violence. Now and then, an angry explosion of lightning floods the room with a cold and diabolical blue light while a tremendous discharge of thunder, like the report of some mighty dwarven siege gun, causes the walls and floors of the mansion to tremble and quiver.

Exploring this room reveals almost nothing of use to the PCs, although any number of tidbits might be set before them. The DM is free to follow the guidance of his players and toss them whatever items might seem interesting. For example, if the PCs opt to examine the umbrella stand, they might find a rotting and useless parasol that is clearly similar to those found in the land from which they originated.

Examining the desk, however, results in the discovery of numerous documents and letters. Most of these will crumble into dust when touched, but not before the PCs are able to note that they are all addressed to Lady Shadowborn and that the address given is one that is known, although not intimately, to them.

A search for secret panels on the desk will, if successful, turn up a bone scroll case once sealed with wax. If opened, it will prove to contain a single sheet of parchment with no obvious writing on it. A *read magic* spell cast upon the parchment reveals the following message:

Lady Shadowborn,

Word has reached us that some of your old enemies have been seen in your area. Although their purpose is not known to us at this time, it seems clear that they may attempt to avenge themselves upon you for your past services against them. We urge you to take precautions, and offer the fullest aid if you should need it.

As always, we remember the debt that our lands owe to you and the shining steel that once you held in our defense.

This letter is penned and signed in a flowery hand and bears the signature and signet of an important but long-dead nobleman from the PCs' homeland. The name should be one that the PC will recognize and associate with the cause of good.

3. Antechamber.

The floor of this chamber is powdered with a heavy layer of dust. As you move into it, your feet kick up a fine cloud into the air. The falling dust moves slowly, almost hypnotically, in the still air, and you cannot help but notice the delicate patterns it seems to form as it floats sluggishly downward. For an instant, it seems to form into an evil face, but as you look closer you can see that this must have been only a trick of the light, for the vision has passed.

This room has no windows or vents of any sort, making the air stuffy and thick. Although it is colder than you might expect in here, the heavy air reminds you a hot, muggy day in summer. Something about the smell of mildew sends a nervous shiver through your bones.

A long rack runs along the northern wall of this room. All of the dozen or so coats, cloaks, and other outdoor garments hanging here were once of excellent quality, although they have decayed into worthlessness.

While there is no obvious danger to the PCs in this room, there is a considerable threat to be found among the moldering coats. All of them have become tainted with brown mold. Although this monstrous fungus has spread itself over a dozen garments, it still counts as one patch of the organism. The dispersion of the creature, however, has reduced its effectiveness so that all those in the room are allowed a save vs. paralysis to take only half damage from the mold's heat drain. Further, only those who actually examine the clothes will be subject to the attacks of the creature.

Mold, brown: INT non; AL N; AC 9; MV 0; HD 0; hp n/a; THAC0 19; #AT nil; Dmg nil; SA freezing; SD absorb heat; SZ S; XP 0; MC.

4. Sitting Room.

This room was once a finely appointed sitting room. A number of comfortable chairs, small tables, and a pair of ornate sofas are positioned quaintly around the chamber. It is obvious that these items have all felt the ravages of time, however, for the smell of mildew is heavy in the air and the wooden legs of the furniture are clearly in the last stages of rot and decay. As with the other rooms of the manor, the floor here is covered in dust. A mirror hangs on the southern wall.

A bottle bearing the label of a famous vineyard lies on the floor in the center of a dark stain that looks suspiciously like blood. The bottle was blown from dark glass and has been laced to the floor by cobwebs. It does not appear to have been opened and might still contain a fine vintage.

A secret door is set in the south wall of this room, disguised as the full-length mirror hanging on the wall. The mirror rotates on a central axis if someone pushes against one side of it and makes an open-doors strength roll (the mirror is as hard as steel and unbreakable).

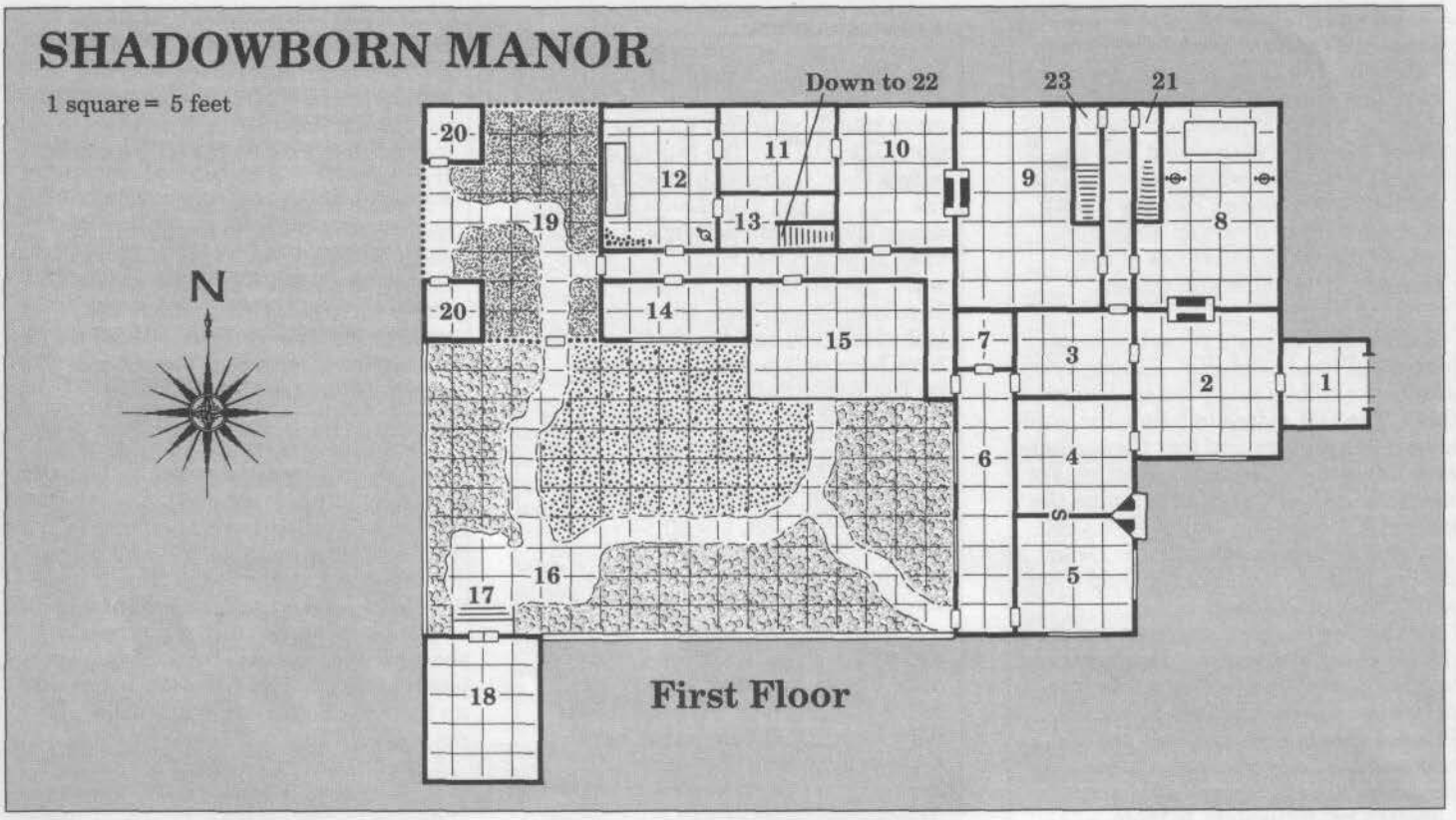
Ebonbane has decided to put on a show here for the explorers. Using its powers as lord of this domain, it has set up the wine bottle as a trap, although not the kind that a thief might find.

Although the wine inside the bottle is still quite good, Ebonbane will use it as the focus of a frightful spell. By means of its dark powers, it has captured a wandering odem and imprisoned it in the bottle. Anyone who pulls the cork on the bottle breaks the spell and partially frees the undead spirit inside the bottle. In order to escape the bottle, however, the odem must enter the body of someone *as he drinks the wine.* If no one decides to sample the vintage, the spirit lingers in the bottle and waits for some thirsty person to set it free.

The only means by which the odem can escape Ebonbane's *curse* without someone drinking the wine is for the bottle to be broken. If the PCs decide to smash the bottle or even break it by accident, the odem is freed and can act normally.

Odem: INT very; AL CE; AC n/a; MV 9; HD n/a; hp n/a; THAC0 n/a; #AT 1; Dmg nil; SA possession; SD immune to physical damage; MR special; SZ n/a; ML special; XP 1,000.

The odem is fully detailed in the RAVENLOFT boxed set. For those using this adventure without that reference, the following summary is supplied: An odem is an invisible spirit that seeks out host bodies to possess. It can be driven out of a host by spells like *dismissal* or *banishment.* Odems cannot be turned by priests.



A person possessed by an odem remains aware and alert, but his body responds to the odem's will. Mind-affecting spells cannot influence the actions of the odem-controlled body. Spells like *trap the soul, temporal stasis,* or *imprisonment* will affect both the odem and its host body. Once in control of a body, the odem seeks to cause harm and mayhem. Attacks that kill the body merely force the odem to seek out a new host.

5. Parlor.

A pair of dusty, cracked windows spills the flickering light of the storm across the broken, crumbling furniture that fills this parlor. Although it was obviously once the scene of fine gatherings and aristocratic meetings, a shroud of time hangs heavily over it now.

Cobwebs run from the rafters high overhead to the shattered remnants of civilized living that dot the room, often becoming thick enough to cast solid shadows in the bursts of light that filter through the dirty windows. As you watch, it seems that some of the shadows move and shift in unnatural ways, as if they were living things themselves. When you look closer, however, you are able to see that this must be only an optical illusion.

As the PCs explore this room, they will be attacked by a living web that has taken up residence in this room (see the FORGOTTEN REALMS *Monstrous Compendium* for complete details).

Web, Living: INT semi; AL N; AC 9; MV 6; HD 6; hp 26; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 (shock); SA *lightning bolts;* SD absorb electricity, resistant to many spells and weapons; SZ S; ML 10; XP 2,000; MC.

Edged weapons used against the web inflict full damage but split the creature into two parts (each with half the remaining hit points of the original). While most webs can fire two *lightning bolts* per turn, those with fewer than 9 hp can release only one. Blunt or piercing weapons cause only half damage. Attacks based on cold, heat, fire, or water do no damage to a living web, and those based on electricity cause the creature to grow so that it gains 1 HD per 8 hp damage such an attack would normally inflict upon it. A living web is immune to spells like *fear* or *repulsion.*

Once the web has been defeated, a search of the room can be made. Each searching PC is entitled to an intelligence check on 1d20; those making successful checks note the presence of a small ruined altar in the southeast corner of the room. Although it has suffered more than most of the other pieces of furniture in the room, it is still identifiable. Examining the altar turns up a number of items marked with the holy symbol of a familiar lawful-good church from the PCs' home world. Thus, if the party is based in the Forgotten Realms, the church could be that of Ilmater, Torm, or Tyr. The following boxed text describes what the PCs find:

The altar was a small one, no doubt intended for use only in a passing prayer or as a reminder of the importance of religion in the home. Upon the altar you find a holy tome, its pages strangely charred and blacked as if by a fire that touched nothing else in the room; the book is unreada-

ble. Beneath the book lies a silver holy symbol. This once-fine token of faith has been twisted and bent by some unknown force. The inscription on the back has been partially melted and is indecipherable. An assortment of minor items (incense, candles, and the like) have all become deformed and corrupted, too.

Allow the PCs a few minutes to examine the items on the altar. The items have no trace of magical power in them and, as this is Ravenloft, any attempt to *detect evil* will fail. The DM should feel free to include any other items that might drive home the familiar nature of the religion the PCs are dealing with. If, for example, the lawful-good faith chosen for Lady Shadowborn is known for its use of bright red roses in religious services, the PCs might find a number of these flowers whose petals have turned largely black. When the PCs begin to finish up their investigations of this area, read the following:

It is impossible to avoid a sickening feeling of debauchery as you examine these defiled items. Thus, it seems almost natural when you notice that the air in this room has come to hold a sickening odor of decay and rotting flesh. As you look up from the altar, you are horrified to find that the walls of the room have begun to drip blood.

In seconds, the creeping rivulets of blood begin to form a pattern on the wall. As you watch, letters become visible. Then, as a loathsome scent of death fills your lungs, a message grows clear on the walls. It reads:

The Bane of Shadows cannot be denied
The Children of Shadows have no place to hide
Darkness around and darkness without
Ebon minions of death now circle about

Ebonbane is taunting the party again, of course. As soon as the message is read, the blood runs together, smears, and becomes unreadable. Less than a minute later, there is no trace of blood on the wall and only the odor of decay in the air as a reminder of the menacing words. Because of the power Ebonbane has at its command, no attempt to affect formation or dissipation of the message (magically or otherwise) will accomplish anything.

6. The Gallery. Prior to describing this room, the DM must decide which faith Lady Shadowborn followed. Details on making this decision can be found in the description of area 5.

You have entered a long, wide hallway with a row of large windows along one side. Although all is dark beyond the windows, occasional splintering branches of lightning provide enough illumination to show you a wide courtyard bordered in a low stone wall and dominated by overgrown shrubberies.

As you examine the hallway, you note that the wall opposite the windows display a number of fine paintings. Although time has drained them of the vital colors that were once no doubt present, they are still recognizable as portraits. As you walk past them, they seem to follow you with their eyes. A sense of familiarity is in the room, and a feeling of pleading helplessness seems to emanate from these ancient faces.

Each of these paintings depicts one of the members of the Shadowborn family. Because the chosen PC is only distantly related to the Shadowborns, none of the faces will be familiar to him. The other party members, however, are entitled to check against their wisdom scores (on 4d6) to notice a similarity between the images in the paintings and the PC related to the Shadowborn family.

Although each of the paintings is identified with a gold plate, the names mean nothing to the party members. Each plate lists the name of the individual and gives the span of his or her life. In most cases, a relationship to another portrait is provided, so that it is obvious that the adventurers are looking at a family album of sorts. When the PCs reach the far end of the hall (no matter where they started), they face the picture of Lady Shadowborn.

The last canvas depicts an elegant young woman in gleaming plate armor. The holy symbol of her faith is set behind her on a grand standard. There is a look of defiance in the woman's eyes, and a stern set to her jaw that shows an inner strength easily the equal of her beauty. A gold plate set into the ornate wooden frame around the painting identifies this woman as "Lady Shadowborn, Pure of Heart, Defender of the Faith."

As you watch, the colors in the painting begin to return, and the faded hues of time are replaced with the vivid tones of life. Slowly but deliberately, the image of Lady Shadowborn begins to move. Her head turns, bringing its piercing gaze to bear on [name of her relative]. The delicate mouth begins to speak.

If the PCs try to destroy the painting or prevent this transformation, they are free to do so. However, as this is nothing more than an illusion created by Lady Shadowborn with her powers as a geist, they can have no effect upon it. Only a *dispel magic* spell or similar spell (cast by any level character) can prevent it from continuing.

"My friend," she says, "I cannot offer thanks enough for your presence here. I have learned that only one of our kindred can overcome the evil that has settled on this place and drive the darkness from our ancestral home. In the name of all that is holy, I call upon you to seek out the foul thing that calls itself Ebonbane and recover the four elemental keys that can destroy it. If you do not act quickly, its power will overwhelm you and, with your death, it will be freed from this place and returned to the world we love. With no trace of Shadowborn blood to check its evil power, this fiend cannot but triumph over all who stand before it."

With that, the image fades away and you see only the dark and faded painting on the wall. As if to punctuate the importance of the lady's final words, a grand stroke of lightning rips across the sky and a titanic crash of thunder roars in the darkness beyond the windows.

7. Closet.

The door opens on a darkened chamber with a dozen iron hooks set in the wall. Hanging from these hooks are an assortment of garments (jackets and similar outerwear), all of which tell of great wealth left to the merci-

less ravages of time. A number of wooden boxes and chests are stacked in here, none of which are locked, and several pairs of boots and shoes stand to one side.

This is a simple closet, nothing more. The boxes contain assorted items (old books, bundled letters, and similar things), none of which has any importance in the adventure. If the box is looted (an act that requires a Ravenloft Powers Check), a number of fairly expensive items (rings, keepsakes, lockets, etc.) totalling 150 gp in value will be found.

8. The Temple. Prior to describing this room, the DM must decide which faith Lady Shadowborn followed. Details on making this decision can be found in the description of area 5.

You have come into a large room clearly established as a temple to the cause of good. The dark and evil feelings that seem to fill the rest of this manor like smoke in a burning house have not been able to gain a foothold in this chamber. As you enter it, a feeling of tranquility and peace falls across your hearts. An aroma of incense lingers lightly in the air, marking a pleasant change from the generally musty atmosphere in the rest of the manor.

While there are no windows in this room, light from the glowing coals in a tall brazier standing near the front of the room fills the place with a warm, red glow. Beyond the bronze brazier, a large altar, fashioned from white marble and set with runes that seem comforting and reassuring, stands with a number of religious ornaments upon it. Standing opposite the brazier is a silver font filled with clear water that smells sweet.

This holy place was Lady Shadowborn's private sanctuary. It is here that her spirit now resides, drawing on the power of her faith to hold off the advances of Ebonbane's evil presence. The burning coals are a sign of her devotion, and nothing the PCs do to them can extinguish their fire.

After the PCs have had a few moments to look around this room, Lady Shadowborn uses her power of illusion to help the PCs find one of the four keys they need to defeat Ebonbane. When her relative casts his gaze upon the altar, read the following to the player:

As you look at the altar, a wisp of smoke escapes from the burning coals of the brazier and drifts toward the marble slab and the holy items set upon it. Gradually the smoke coalesces into the misty outline of a standing woman. She turns and kneels before the altar, bowing her head and seeming to utter a silent prayer. As she finishes and looks up, the smoke dissipates and the slender figure is no more.

As the last traces of the smoke fade away, however, a shimmering aura envelopes the font beside the altar. A deep rumbling voice begins to grow in the air around you until the word "Behold!" is clearly heard. Then, as the echo of the voice dies against the wooden walls, the radiance fades and all is as it was.

Attempts to disrupt the above activities always fail. Once again, this is an illusion crafted by Lady Shadowborn's geist and cannot be affected by the actions of the PCs.

The water in the font is holy water sacred to Lady Shadowborn's deity. Only this holy water will serve as one of the four "keys"; holy water from other sources will not suffice. There is enough holy water in the font to fill four small vials, though only one vial is needed to destroy Ebonbane. If the PCs do not have a container suitable for storing some of the holy water, a search of the font will reveal a secret cache containing three empty glass vials.

9. Library.

You stand amid the shelves of a large library. Books of every shape pack shelves that line the walls. The scent of old paper mingles with the dust that covers every flat surface here to give the place a feeling of antiquity. Unlike other parts of the manor, this room seems to have aged gracefully. A dozen suits of armor stand on display around the room, each bearing a standard with the symbol of Lady Shadowborn's deity. Elsewhere, a number of sculpted figures stand atop pedestals, showing great knights riding into battle with lances high and banners streaming.

A large flat table with half a dozen chairs around it stands in the center of the library. A single tome with a dark leather cover stands open on its surface. A bottle of wine, the cork removed, is positioned next to a fine crystal glass within easy reach of the chair.

The books on the shelves cover all manner of subjects, from history and politics to science and theology. Notably missing, however, are works of fiction. All of the books are neatly categorized by subject. Because of the wealth of information presented here, and despite the fact that the newest of these books is several decades old, anyone who attempts a proficiency check while using the library as a reference source gains a +4 bonus on the attempt.

The suits of armor are nothing more than ceremonial displays. They are purely decorative, nonmagical, and show no sign of being anything other than ornamentation. The PCs are free to do whatever they wish to the suits of armor; nothing will result from their actions.

The book on the table is not originally from this library. It is a trap laid here by Ebonbane's dark magical powers, for it is an ancient and evil text. While a *detect evil* spell will not work on the tome, a *detect magic* spell reveals that it is unique among the occupants of this room. If someone attempts to examine the tome on the table, read the following:

The book before you is unlike the others in the library. It seems to radiate an aura of cold evil that cuts deep into your heart. You find yourself unable to look away from it and suddenly become consumed with a desire to read what is within. Unable to resist this overwhelming urge, you grab at the yellowing pages. As soon as your hands touch them, they crumble into dust, having long ago succumbed to the weathering effects of time. A cold wind seems to blow up from nowhere, carrying away the fragments of paper and scattering them about the room.

As the last shreds of the book are swept off of the table, a series of clanking sounds fills the room. Turning, you see that the suits of armor have begun to move. Each is now surrounded by a pale red glow that

gives it a look of hot metal. One by one, the metal warriors draw their swords and advance on various members of the party. A shrill, metallic laughter seems to fill the air, although its source is not apparent.

The suits of armor have all been transformed into doom guards. If the party has taken some action to render the armor useless (such as breaking the suits down and scattering their component pieces around the room), such a precaution will be overcome in some way (all the pieces might fly together to form the suit, for example). The doom guards attack at once.

Doom Guards (6): INT low; AL N; AC 2; MV 9; HD 5; hp 40 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; SA fear; SD special; MR 25%; SZ M; ML 20; XP 3,000 each (max. hit points); MC (RAVENLOFT appendix).

Doom guards are animated suits of plate armor that have no living creature within them. They attack with whatever weapons they have in hand, usually swords, battle axes, or war hammers, and inflict 1-8 hp damage with each blow they land. However, Ebonbane has used its power to make these suits more powerful, granting them greater damage in battle. In addition, these particular doom guards each have a magic resistance, and each radiates an aura of *fear* that causes all those within 20′ to make a fear check each round. A bonus of +1 per hit die is allowed on the save, so a 5th-level character saves at +5. The results of a failed check are determined in accordance with the RAVENLOFT rules (if these rules are not being used, consider the effects to be similar to those of a *fear* spell). Persons who have failed one check but still remain within range of the *fear* aura are still subject to the aura and must continue to save each round, with the results of additional failures being compounded.

Doom guards are immune to all mind- or body-affecting spells, such as *fear, cause disease, suggestion,* or *charm.* Similarly, they are immune to all poisons. Spells that cause harm by heat and cold inflict half damage at most (if the doom guards save, no damage is taken); electricity affects them normally, as do all weapons. A *transmute metal to wood* or *crystalbrittle* spell instantly destroys doom guards.

10. Dining Room.

You have entered an elegant dining room. A rich oak table stands in the center of the room beneath an extravagant crystal chandelier. A large window on one wall of the room seems to bear the brunt of the storm outside, and the rain hammering upon it fills the room with a drumming that becomes almost hypnotic as you listen. With each burst of lightning, the chandelier seems to dance with electricity as the pale blue glow of the storm bounces away from the hundreds of tiny facets in the crystal.

A rich feast has been laid out on the table. Steaming plates of meat, hot breads, a variety of fresh fruits, and an assortment of wines await you. A place has been set for each member of the party, and it seems that every effort has been made to make the repast as pleasing as possible.

As every person who enters this room will probably guess, this is too good to be true. Ebonbane has set up this meal through arcane means, and it is nothing more than an illusion. There is no aroma of cooked food, and those who sample the meal will discover that is has no taste.

The illusory food is meant only as a distraction, for Ebonbane is at work on an attack against the PCs and hopes to keep their attention fixed on the illusionary feast for only a few seconds. After the party has had the chance to discuss how dangerous this certainly poisonous feast must be, the PCs are be attacked by a force from outside the manor.

A sudden blue light pours into the room through the great window. Each of you is forced to throw your hands over your eyes in an instinctive attempt to avoid blindness and protect your vision. Even before the glare is gone, a tremendous thunderclap tears into the room. In its wake, the window explodes inward, sending a hail of glass and splinters of wood into the air. Like a thousand tiny insects, the fragments of debris rip at exposed skin and clothing. The shockwave of the lightning bolt's near miss is so violent that it slams into you like the concussion of some great bomb, threatening to send you flying across the room like a leaf before a gale.

Everyone in the room must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon. Those who fail take 4-24 hp damage from debris and flying glass. Those who make their checks suffer only half damage (2-12 hp).

Once the save is rolled, every PC must make a Dexterity check or be thrown violently to the ground for an additional 2-12 hp damage. When all this checking is done, read the next paragraph.

The smell of ozone is hot in the air, and every strand of hair on your body crackles with static electricity. A thousand spots of light and patches of darkness swarm through your vision as your eyes fight to throw off the blinding effects of the flash. The ferocity of the storm outside seems to have focused its wrath on this very room. There is no trace of the fine meal that once stood on the oak table, and the chandelier has been dashed against the wall by the might of the tempest.

Slowly your eyes begin to throw off the phantom images that hamper your perceptions of the room. An unusual glow seems to radiate from the area where the window recently stood, but it is impossible to make out any details. A flash of movement causes you to redouble your efforts at regaining clear vision, and you see a spinning mass of light drifting into the room through the window.

The center of the thing is a whirling sphere of light, pale blue in color, that buzzes and crackles as the hammering rain pounds against it. Streamers of electricity dance away from the object, arcing like slender lightning bolts to play across the walls of the room. Where these glowing feelers touch the wooden panels and plaster, tiny fires and explosions spring up. You cannot escape the feeling that the heart of the storm stands before you.

The approaching creature is a lightning quasi-elemental. Originally drawn here by its desire to witness the titanic storm that Ebonbane has created around the manor, it has fallen under Ebonbane's mental control. No power short of a *wish* spell will free it from this domination. Even if freed, it will be unable to leave Ravenloft and, in its rage, will seek to destroy every living thing it encounters.

Quasi-elemental, lightning: INT low; AL N (C); AC 2; MV fly 18 (A) plus special; HD 9; hp 36 (46 originally); THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+9; SA *ball lightning;*

SD special; MR special; SZ S; ML 14; XP 7,000; MM2.

In addition to its normal movement, this creature can *arc* to any grounded or electrically conductive metallic object that weighs more than 5 lbs. and is within 60'. The quasi-elemental normally attacks by touching a target with one of its electrical "limbs," scoring 1d6+9 hp damage with each strike. In addition to this, it can form *ball lightning* that hangs in the air beside it for up to nine rounds. If, during this time, a creature weighing at least 200 lbs. or carrying a large amount of metal (anyone in metal armor) comes within 5', the *ball lightning* discharges itself and inflicts 1-6 hp damage. Only one *ball lightning* can be released per round, although any number of preexisting ones may remain around the monster, awaiting discharge.

Lighting elementals are hit by only +1 or better weapons. If the weapon used is conductive, the wielder takes 1-4 hp damage when he strikes the elemental. Obviously, lightning and other electrical attacks do no damage to the creature. Fire and acids harm the elemental but inflict only half damage, while cold attacks do full damage. Water-based attacks inflict double normal damage (or 1-8 hp per gallon). The falling rain outside the manor has weakened the creature, but no further weakening occurs inside the structure. If the PCs move the fight outside, the quasi-elemental will suffer 2 hp damage per round.

11. The Larder.

This dark and windowless chamber offers some escape from the constant sounds of the storm outside. While the dull thrumming of rain can still be heard, and the distant rumble of thunder still sends shivers through the manor, this enclosed room seems resistant to the storm's ravages.

Shelves, covered with the long-decayed remains of various foods, line every wall of this room. A number of canned and jarred items remain, most looking as if they might still be safe to eat. A trio of barrels (one marked "Flour," one marked "Salt," and the last unlabeled) stand in one corner. A tap has been set in the side of the unmarked barrel.

There is nothing of any great importance in this room. It was simply a larder. There are a number of preserved foods here; rations for 2-12 people for 2-12 days can be found in a thorough search. However, each meal consumed here requires a save vs. poison (with a +4 bonus) to avoid a mild case of food poisoning. Anyone failing his roll will become nauseated and suffer a −2 penalty on all attack, damage, and saving rolls for 24 hours.

The barrel with the tap is empty but once held wine. The other two barrels are roughly half filled with the indicated ingredients. While the salt is fine, the flour has been overgrown by a harmless though foul-smelling mold.

12. The Kitchen.

You have entered a well-equipped kitchen. A large black stove stands along one wall, with a variety of pots and pans hung neatly to either side of it. A broad counter with numerous drawers set in it runs along the north wall under a window. Various utensils—an assortment of knives, ladles, and the like—stand ready for use in holders atop the counter. A rusty iron pump stands in one corner of the room, with a split and useless wooden bucket placed beneath its spout.

As the PCs look around, they find only things appropriate to a kitchen. If they want to look for a specific item, the DM should simply consider whether a wealthy and well-appointed kitchen would logically have such a thing. If it would, the PCs ought to be able to find it with a brief (1-6 minute) search. All such items, however, will be in fairly sad shape. Knives, for instance, have rusty blades and are dull. The silverware, although valuable, is so badly tarnished that it looks worthless. (There are 120 pieces of silverware, each piece worth 5 gp.) There are no herbs or spices here, for all such things were kept in area 13.

As soon as someone tries to leave the room, any open doors slam shut and *wizard lock* (10th level). The door to the stove blows open as if from the concussion of some explosion, and all light sources in the party's possession are extinguished (even those of a magical nature). Attempts to rekindle fires or reactivate magical spells all fail.

For a brief moment, all is still in the sudden onslaught of darkness. Even the periodic illumination of the lightning seems to have been swallowed up by the inky blackness that surrounds you. Were your eyes not beginning to adjust to the lack of light, you might well believe that you had fallen under the influence of a *darkness* spell.

Suddenly, a crimson glow pours outward from the stove. There is a deafening blast, like the firing of a cannon, and the heavy door of the iron stove hurtles across the room. It crashes against the far wall, sending splinters of plaster into the air, and then falls with a ringing concussion to the wooden floor.

A raging fire, as red as fresh blood, has sprung to life within the stove. It feeds itself on neither wood nor coal, but burns hotly nonetheless. In horror you note that a pair of eyes and a wildly dancing mouth are visible in the flames. To your great surprise, a hissing, sputtering voice issues forth.

"Welcome to my home, Children of Shadows. There can be no way out of my realm. The Lady Shadowborn has called you to your deaths, just as I called her to hers so many years ago. She has done a foolish thing, for with your deaths she will lose faith and that will cost her the battle.

"Feel fear, children! For just as she calls upon those of her kind to defend her, so I call upon my heirs to strike you down!"

With that, the flames vanish with a loud "whoosh" and the darkness returns in full force. Attempts to make a light now will succeed, for Ebonbane has lifted its spell. Shortly after the flames vanish, perhaps while the PCs are remaking their lights, a stroke of lightning outside illuminates the room and shows the PCs the nature of the threat before them.

From outside, a bright fracture of lightning splits the sky, spilling its freezing light into the kitchen. In horror, you note that the air is alive with metal. All manner of bladed items, from paring knives to large butcher knives, have lifted into the air and hang motionless in the light of the storm. Just as the blue radiance of the storm flashes off the blades, a thunderclap shakes the room. The crash of thunder seems to trigger the advance of the knives. As one, they hurl themselves through the air and attack!

Ebonbane is using its power to *command blades* to cause all of the knives in the room to attack. The PCs may notice other edged items such as meat cleavers are not being animated. Further, the PCs' own swords and daggers leap into the air and join the attack. Each turn, every PC in the room must make a dexterity check. A failed check results in 2-12 hp damage from the various kitchen knives, while a successful check allows the PC to escape with half damage. The referee should resolve attacks on PCs by their own blades individually; a PC may make two grabbing attacks per round against AC 0, and must make a strength check on 4d6 each round to control the weapon and not be struck by it. In all such cases, the weapons have a THAC0 of 10 (plus any magical bonus) and make use of any innate abilities they possess. For instance, a *flame tongue* sword ignites before attacking, and a *short sword of quickness* always attacks before its target can react.

Fighting off the blades is almost impossible. Scoring a solid hit breaks a knife or similar kitchen implement (assume they are all AC 0), but there are 71 such weapons and the attacks continue until all such items are destroyed.

Escaping from this room is dangerous and difficult. Perhaps the easiest way to do it is to vault over the counter and through the window. Since the spell does not extend beyond the walls of the kitchen, all those who leave in this way are safe. Of course, they will take 1-4 hp damage from the shattering glass.

Although the doors of the kitchen are *wizard locked* (10th level), they can be opened by a *knock* spell cast by anyone of 6th level or higher. Some other spell (such as a *passwall* spell) might be used to escape from the room or to knock out a door or hole in one of the walls; that is perfectly acceptable. Of course, leaving the room in this way means that the party must abandon any weapons that have been animated by Ebonbane.

The only way to halt the effects of the spell and bring down the flying blades is with a *limited wish, anti-magic shell,* or *wish* spell. Once such a tactic is employed, the attack ceases and all of the party's weapons can be recovered. Ebonbane allows this, not wishing to slay the party—yet.

13. Pantry.

As you enter this room, a wash of fragrances fills your noses. The air here is alive with a variety of scents, ranging from the pleasing aroma of cinnamon to the tart odor of sage. The reason for this is quickly evident, for the walls are lined with shelves of dried spices and herbs. While some have clearly been lost to the flow of time, others are intact and seem to have resisted decay.

A narrow flight of wooden stairs leads down from this room into a dark chamber below. Thick strands of cobwebs have been spun across the stairwell opening, giving the place an impression of long ages of neglect. From time to time, there seems to be a hint of motion in the darkness below, and the faintest impression of sound reaches your ears. With the noise of the storm outside, however, it is impossible to tell if these are true impressions or merely the workings of your imaginations.

Like area 11 (the larder), this room is largely safe. The DM is free to make any

manner of spices available to the PCs here, with his own judgment being the final ruling on what is in the pantry. The stairs lead down to the wine cellar (area 22).

14. The Greenhouse.

The ceiling and one wall of this room are composed of dusty glass. Rows of long, narrow boxes that now hold only the faintest remains of dead plants and dried-out soil make it clear that this was once a greenhouse. Cracks in the glass of the ceiling allow a number of continuing streams of water to dribble down into this room, forming pools on the stone floor that almost seem to look like patterns or pictures. It is impossible, however, to make out what images might be lurking within them.

Beyond the glass, you can see a large courtyard with the overgrown remnants of what was once a flower bed and the bedraggled shrubs of a long-neglected topiary. With each flash of lightning in the sky overhead, haunting shapes and shadows seem to move about the courtyard, but there is never enough time for you to pick out details or even confirm that you are seeing more than optical illusions.

The storm seems almost like a living thing outside, for it tears at the glass with the fury of a caged animal. Every bit of energy that it is able to muster seems to have been focused into an assault on this greenhouse. With each second, the glass creaks and new cracks seem to appear. It seems impossible that the windows will hold up much longer under the ravages of this tempest.

If the party remains in the greenhouse too long, the storm outside may well shatter the windows around them and shower them with glass shards. The chance of this happening is 10% per round spent here. If this event occurs, each adventurer suffers 2-20 hp damage, although a save vs. breath weapons is allowed for half damage.

In addition, if the party members opt to dig around in the planters, they will discover that one of the boxes is not, in fact, filled with normal soil. In actuality, it is home to an earth weird. This cousin to the water weird immediately attacks anyone coming near it. While it is very similar to a water weird, its manner of attack is somewhat different.

The earth weird lies in wait in one of the 10 boxes of earth. The DM can select a specific box or assign one at random. Only the use of a *detect invisible* spell will reveal the creature before it strikes. Like the water weird, an earth weird takes two rounds to assume its serpentine form before it can attack. During this time, however, it is itself invulnerable to harm. When the monster begins to form, read the following text to the player whose PC activated it:

As you examine the planter, the soil in it begins to move. It stirs slowly at first, as if some form of animal were rooting about below the surface. Then, with a sudden fury, a stream of dirt bursts free of the box and rises into the air. Slowly weaving back and forth, like a cobra to the music of a snake charmer, the column of soil takes on the appearance of a serpent with burning red eyes. Hissing out a cloud of dust, it surges forward as the thunder outside seems to take on the cadence of a distant, hollow laughter.

Earth weird (1): INT very; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 18; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA suffocation; SD special; SZ L; ML 13; XP 420; new.

The earth weird attacks by lashing out with its body and bludgeoning victims. It strikes as a 6-HD monster (THAC0 15) and inflicts 1-4 hp damage with each blow. Anyone hit by the monster must make a saving throw vs. death magic. Failure indicates that the creature has managed to fill the victim's mouth and nose with soil, making it impossible to breathe. A natural roll of 1 on this save indicates that the victim's lungs have been filled as well. Clearing the air passages of someone who has merely failed his saving throw, but whose lungs are clear, requires one round of effort. Rules for handling suffocation are found on page 122 of the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*.

For someone who has rolled a 1, however, magical means must be used to save his life. There are few ways to draw earth out of someone's lungs. A *dig* spell can be used to draw the earth out in one round, as can a *limited wish* or *wish* spell. A *feign death* spell could be used to eliminate the victim's need to breathe until another solution to the problem is found. Other methods might be tried, and will work or fail as the DM sees fit.

Attacks with edged weapons cause only half damage to the creature and require that the attacker make a saving throw vs. paralysis, or his weapon breaks and becomes useless. Magical weapons are entitled to a bonus equal to their magical pluses. Blunt weapons inflict full damage to the monster. Cold- and fire-based spells cause no damage to the creature, while a *transmute rock to mud* spell instantly slays the horror. If the monster is reduced to 0 hp but not disrupted with the above spell, it reforms in two rounds and begins its attack anew.

15. The Garden Porch.

As you step onto the slick stones of the porch, the storm seems to abate slightly. While lightning still dances before the dark clouds, and thunder still makes it difficult for you to talk, the tempest seems somehow less "angry" than before. Still, you cannot help but notice that the rotted and broken remnants of wooden furniture that are scattered about the porch give silent testimony to the fury of this and previous storms.

The porch is nestled between the side of the manor and what must once have been a grand garden and arboretum. Great puddles have formed, making the place look almost like a swamp now. With each flash of lightning, the dark corners and shadows of the garden seem to jump and dance about like spirits in the night.

A cobblestone path leads away from the porch and into the overgrown shrubs that dominate the half-flooded courtyard. After several yards the path forks, with one branch heading off toward what looks like a mausoleum and the other curving around to meet another door into the manor house. A low stone wall is visible on the other side of the courtyard.

Anyone leaving the porch to walk down one of the paths or explore the overgrown gardens will find nothing except lots of mud and water. There is a 1-in-20 chance, however, that anyone standing in the open courtyard will be struck by lightning (thanks to the influence of Ebonbane). Check for each party member once every 10 minutes as the PCs explore the grounds. Anyone struck

by lightning takes 5-30 hp damage unless a save vs. breath weapons is made, in which case he takes only half damage. If two characters are in physical contact or in close proximity, both might be affected by a single stroke of lightning.

16. The Garden.

A once-elaborate topiary garden confronts you, its fantastically shaped shrubs and trees now distorted by disease, overgrowth, and shadow. In the middle of the overgrown garden, you come to a clearing that stands just outside a large stone tomb. Lying on its back in the mud here is a skeleton in a bashed and weathered suit of plate armor. A broken broad sword, its blade set with runes and symbols, has been plunged through the body from behind—clearly the death blow that felled this warrior. A buckled kite shield now lies in a tangle of brambles that seem to clutch at it as if it were of great importance to them.

A set of stone steps to the south lead up to an iron door that promises entry to a large marble crypt. A great lock that looks worn and forgotten is set into the portal. Clearly, no one has entered this place in years. Although the outside of the tomb is decorated with but a few lawful-good religious symbols, an ornate carving set above the door bears the word "Shadowborn."

If the PCs have explored the house and encountered Lady Shadowborn, an examination of the body will make it clear that this is, most likely, her corpse. The shield and sword were once both magical, but their power has been drained away by Ebonbane, leaving them worthless. Because of Ebonbane's power in this realm, any attempt to *raise* or *resurrect* Lady Shadowborn here will fail.

If the PCs think to use some means of communicating with this body (a *speak with dead* spell) or some form of informational magic (*augury, detect evil,* or *divination,* for example), they can learn much that is helpful to them. Because of the influence of Lady Shadowborn over this place, all such spells will have unusual effects and, in the case of a *speak with dead* spell, no Ravenloft Powers Check is required. If some form of divination magic is used above or near the skeleton, read the following passage:

A thin wisp of smoke, hardly visible in the gloom and darkness of the night, slips free of the skeleton's mouth and rises into the air. As it does so, the wind picks up, clawing at the vapor as if to scatter it. Although it swirls and ripples under the influence of the storm, the mist seems invulnerable to the wrath of the squall. Slowly, the mist takes on the shape of a woman's face. As it casts a friendly smile toward you, a sweet and delicate voice fills the clearing. As the figure speaks, the storm releases a hail of lightning bolts, sending forth a barrage of thunderous concussions as if to drown out the voice. Curiously, the delicate words seem no more vulnerable to the storm than the mist was.

"Perhaps the most fleeting of the keys is this: the breath of the dead. Carry it with you and it will help to choke the fires of evil that challenge you. Only those who are quick and ready can contain the essence of the dear departed, however, and without it, you will face the darkness as newborn babes might stand against the hunting wolf."

As these words are spoken, the image fades and the winds and rain prevail. In a suddenly burst of the storm's fury, the illusion reverts to mist and is scattered into nothingness.

The reference to the "breath of the dead" is an indication that the key of air is to be found within the tomb itself. Additional information on obtaining this vital element is provided in the description of area 18. If the PCs seem to be at a loss to understand this, the DM should feel free to provide them with further clues if they use additional divination magic.

17. The Doors of the Dead.

As you stand before the iron door to the crypt, a strange face seems to form in the metal. It radiates an aura of absolute evil so intense that it causes a dull aching to issue forth from the marrow in your bones. You feel the cold touch of death brush across your souls and feel as though you would be helpless to resist if this foul presence wanted to take your lives at this instant. Presently, this horrid weakness passes from you, but the sense of foreboding that accompanied it cannot be so easily shaken off.

As the face fixes its burning red eyes upon your party, a dark voice grates out of it and fills the air. "Move quickly, Children of the Shadows, for you can enter the realm of the dead but once!" With that, the voice transforms into a booming laughter that seems to merge with the thunder of the raging storm until the two are one. With that, the face ripples and melts away, returning the door to its normal state.

This visitation from Ebonbane is meant to prod the PCs into opening the tomb quickly (hopefully before they are ready to capture the "breath of the dead" (see area 18), or frighten them off. In either case, they will be unable acquire the key that rests here and Ebonbane will be safe.

Getting into the tomb is easy enough. The lock, although old and rusted, can be opened by any thief with the aid of some oil and his picks. If such a subtle method fails to accomplish the task, a blow from a weapon may be used to open the door (treat the lock as AC 2 with 6 hp).

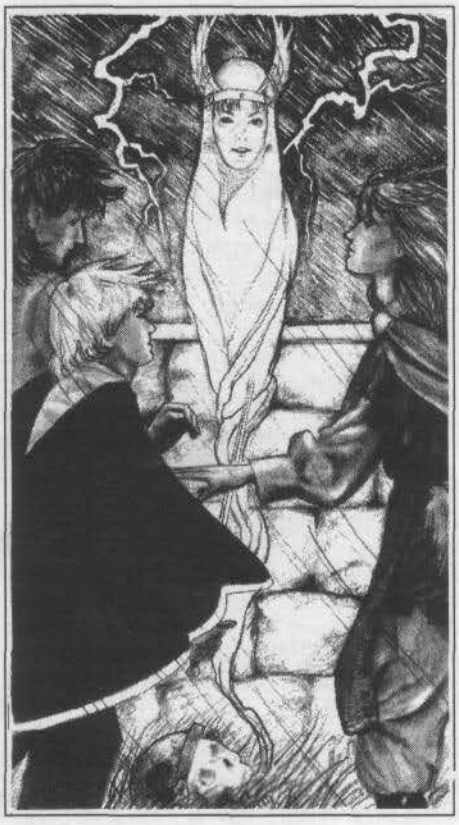
18. Inside the Crypt.

You stand in the shadow of death. All around you are the white marble walls of a tomb. Set out evenly about this chamber are half a dozen stone caskets lying atop marble slabs. Each is marked with a name plate that identifies its occupant as one of the Shadowborn family.

The stale air in here is quickly freshened as the cold winds of the storm sweep into the mausoleum. As the winds rush between the standing caskets, a hissing sound seems to issue forth, as if some great invisible entity had just sighed with relief.

There is no danger to the party in this place, but the PCs must acquire the "breath of the dead" if they are to have any hope of defeating Ebonbane.

An examination of the name plaques on the caskets reveals a brief epitaph set below each name. Any PC taking a close look at one of the coffins will no-



tice that something more is written on the caskets, something that dust and age have made it difficult to read. A little elbow grease and a rag, however, make it possible to read each of the inscriptions:

Lord Malcom Shadowborn
May his soul feel the happiness it longed for in life.

Lord Desmund Shadowborn
Ever the wanderer and seeker of knowledge,
He sought solutions to problems without answers.

Lady Sandra Pellman Shadowborn
Whose smile bore the radiance of the morning sun
And whose life, like the last light of dusk
Faded too soon.

Lord Horace Shadowborn
The key to his happiness
Lies in the earthen roots of this great house.
May they be as deep as the love we felt for him.

Lady Penelope Shadowborn
The last to turn away from danger
And the first to hold her shield above the oppressed.
May her name be long remembered.

The PCs may note that the message on Horace Shadowborn's final resting place makes mention of a key. This is, in fact, one of the four keys and refers to the soil in the wine cellar (area 22) beneath the house. Soil taken from this place will serve an important role in the final battle with Ebonbane. If the PCs miss this clue, the use of an *augury, divination,* or similar spell can lead them back to it later.

The Breath of the Dead

The spirit of Lady Shadowborn spoke truly when she said that this was the most fleeting of the keys. In order to capture the "breath of the dead," the PCs must open one of the caskets. As soon as they do so, a thin wisp of vapor will issue forth from the lips of the mummified corpse within. This is the all-important "breath of the dead." If the PCs act quickly and take a sample as soon as they open the casket, there will be no problem. Getting a sample is simply a matter of thrusting a glass vial (empty, of course) into the dispersing cloud of vapor and then stoppering it quickly. Some other container might be used (a wine bottle or metal flask, for example), but it must be done in the same round that the coffin is opened or the winds from the storm will scatter the vapor and render it unsuitable for use against Ebonbane.

19. Kitchen Yard.

You stand in what may once have been a well-tended courtyard. A solid but roughly weathered wooden fence runs along the sides of this place. Tangles of weeds and creepers claw at the cobblestone path that runs from the manor house to a door set into the wooden fence, and to a pair of wooden buildings set well away from the manor itself.

Overhead, the storm seems to have changed its nature slightly. Where once it was a savage and brutal force casting down lightning bolts like artillery fire on an enemy fortress, now it has ground into the even, measured pace of an army on the march. With almost rhythmic regularity, a flash of lightning illuminates the courtyard, and the rolling crash of thunder shudders through the air around you.

20. The Outhouses. Each of these areas is roughly the same. The DM can easily make minor alterations in the following boxed copy to give each outhouse unique qualities.

You have entered a sturdy old outhouse. The wooden roof and walls have not stood up well to the storm, however, and water is making its way through all manner of cracks and holes. There is no discernable odor in this place apart from that of water and wood, an unusual characteristic for such a structure.

These places have been unvisited for many years. Natural biological action has long since stripped these privies of their traditional aroma.

21. Stairs Up. If the DM is turning to this section as a result of the party's attempt to enter the house via the windows on the second floor, the text below may have to be altered somewhat before it is read to the players.

The purpose of this encounter is to drive home to the players that their PCs are in a region where everything, even the elements themselves, have turned against them. On the map of Shadowborn Manor, details of the upper floor are provided for the sake of completeness. If the party is having some trouble finding the four keys or seems in need of help in resolving the adventure, the DM might want to change this event to allow part of the top floor to survive the storm, planting an important clue there for the adventurers to discover.

You stand at the base of a stout flight of stairs that leads up to the manor's second floor. Ornate railings run along both sides of the stairs. Cast from what appears to be brass, these railings take the shapes of long, twisting snakes. Small jewels, obviously nothing more than glass, are set in their eyes.

At their top, the stairs appear to open out into a short hallway with four doors. A thin rivulet of water trickles down the steps like a tiny waterfall, to splash softly onto an expensive looking rug at your feet. The water has soaked the rug thoroughly, possibly ruining it.

The rug is of little value anyway, about 5 gp in good condition, and there is little that can be done to restore it to such a state. Likewise, the banisters,

while fairly valuable (about 250 gp total), are 25' long and would be almost impossible to carry around.

The real threat here, however, comes from the event that unfolds as the PCs begin to climb the stairs to the second floor. Once they announce their intention to do so, read the following text:

> As you reach the halfway point on the stairs, a great roar fills the air. It sounds like the enraged howl of a charging dragon. Before a single weapon can be drawn, however, the world seems to tear itself apart around you.
>
> A monumental blast of wind hits you from all sides. The sound of splintering timbers and shattering glass fills your ears, and the stairs seem to vanish from beneath your feet. With horror, you realize that the ceiling has been torn away from the manor and that nothing stands between you and the raging storm. Even as this thought crosses your mind, you see that the remnants of the second floor have been picked up and carried off by a great whirlwind of air. As your bodies crash down onto the floor below, you realize that you have just come within inches of being swallowed up by a tornado!

Each member of the party must make a saving throw vs. breath weapons. Those who fail take 6-36 hp damage from buffeting winds, the fall to the floor, and the hail of debris thrown up by the passing twister. Those who make their saves take only half damage. Some objects (DM's discretion) might be required to save to avoid falling damage as well.

Of course, a real tornado would probably have destroyed the entire manor and devastated the grounds around it. This was nothing more than a playful swat from Ebonbane, who is using its powers as lord of this domain to harass the adventurers.

22. Wine Cellar.

> You have come into a large wine cellar. A number of racks stand here, each filled with bottles of various vintages. Some of them are cracked, and dark stains in the natural floor beneath them show where their lost contents were spilled. Other bottles, some perhaps quite valuable, seem to be in good condition. The odor of raw earth is heavy here. Dust lies thick on every flat surface, and cobwebs run between the brick walls and the wine racks. Curiously, there is no sign of flooding or insect life in the basement.
>
> There is something else here, though. A feeling of "presence" lingers in the stone walls and earthen floor. Your every move in this place seems to draw the attention of some supernatural entity that you cannot directly sense or identify.

There are about 25 bottles of wine here that are not obviously damaged or spoiled. Of those, 1 in 10 has not gone to vinegar. Of course, the only way to tell for certain if an individual bottle is good is to open it (thus ruining its potential value). If a buyer were found, each good bottle could be sold for as much as 250 gp.

The soil in this room represents the roots of the Shadowborn family. As such, it is one of the four keys (the key of earth) needed to overcome Ebonbane. The presence here is the watchful eye of Horace Shadowborn, who built this house and prized his wine collection more than life itself. Apart from sensing his lingering essence in this room, the party is unable to interact with the spirit of Horace Shadowborn in any way.

23. The Cellar Stairs.

> You stand at the top of a narrow flight of stairs that leads down into darkness. A musty smell, like that of a fresh grave, drifts up from below, and a faint coldness seems brush against your feet like cold water on the shores of an icy pond. It seems that you can catch glimpses of movement in the darkness below, but this may be just a trick of the poor lighting.

The stairs creak and groan ominously as the party descends, but nothing dangerous happens. It wouldn't hurt, however, for the DM to make the players announce how much weight their PCs are carrying and then ask for some manner of saving throw to give the impression that this descent is more dangerous than it truly is.

24. The Cellar Door.

> You stand at the bottom of a rickety flight of stairs that leads upward into the manor. The walls here are made of brick, and the floor is fashioned of flagstone.
>
> A single door is set into one wall. While it is crafted from the same sturdy wood as the others in this manor house, it has been reinforced with iron bands. Additionally, a series of dark and evil looking runes has been cut into its surface. A sense of dread seems to hang heavily in the air here, like the murky fog that clings to the surface of a graveyard on chill autumn nights.
>
> As you near the wooden door, the mysterious runes upon it begin to glow. A bizarre aura of scintillating red and orange light, looking almost like some form of spectral fire, forms around each figure. At the same time, a strong odor of brimstone fills this small area. The closer you draw to the door, the more intense the glowing runes become.

This is the door to Lady Shadowborn's workshop. It is also the place that Ebonbane has selected as its "lair." This door cannot be opened by any means unless the adventurers have all four of the keys. To summarize, these are:

—Key of water: Holy water from the font in area 8.

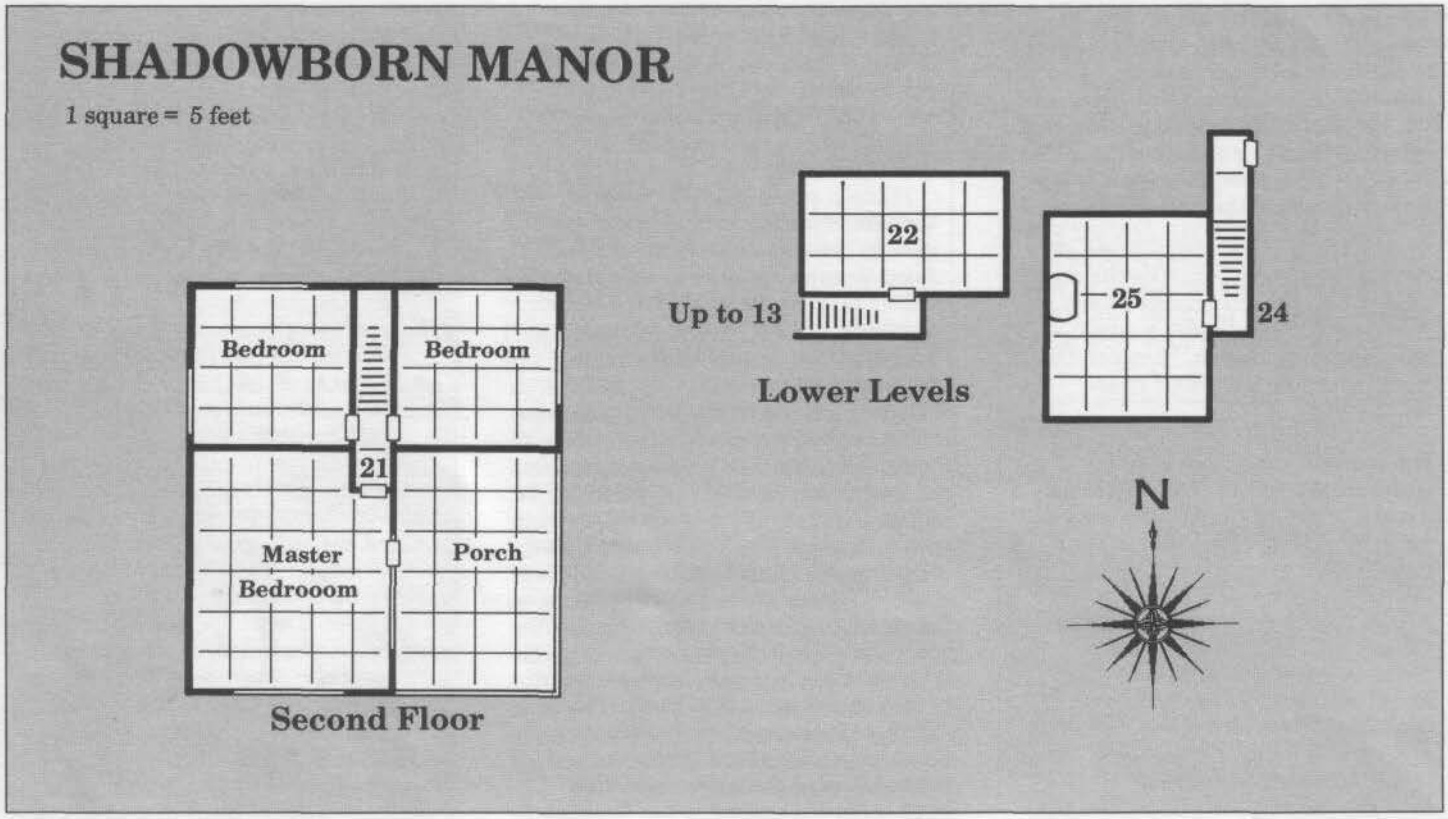
—Key of air: Smoke from lips of a corpse in area 18.

—Key of earth: Soil from the floor of area 22.

—Key of fire: The ability to create some form of magical fire.

If anyone touches the door *and all four keys are not in the party's possession,* Ebonbane issues a challenge. Read the following text aloud:

> As you touch the door, a stream of gleaming fire lances forth from it and engulfs you. Searing heat rips through every part of your body, yet your bones ache as if you were on the verge of freezing to death. Your vision fails, and you can hear nothing but the hammering of your pulse inside your skull. A wicked voice, one that sounds like it comes from some great bellowing creature, pours into your brain:
>
> "Learn what it means to challenge Ebonbane! Learn what it is to suffer the pain of death!"



Have the affected PC make a saving throw vs. death magic. If the PC makes the saving throw, he is reduced to 1 hp and drained of one life energy level. If the roll fails, the PC is consumed by the mystical fire. All that remains of his body and possessions is a faint trace of smoke in the air. The only exception to this destruction will be any of the keys. Those objects (and their containers) are immune to Ebonbane's wrath and will fall to the ground, although a saving throw may be required if they fall more than 5′ or are unusually fragile.

If someone tries to open the door *while the party is in possession of the four keys,* read the following.

> As you draw nearer to the door, the aura around the runes becomes more fierce. A dull throbbing sound, as if a great spell were building up in the air around you, fills the chamber. With a sudden flash of intense scarlet light, the door bursts into flames. A loud, sharp squeal of agony rips into the air as the fire consumes the door. With its last pitiful shriek, the door crumbles into ash and falls to the floor. As the heavy odor of brimstone begins to dissipate, you find that the portal before you stands open.

25. The Workshop.

> You have come into a well-equipped workshop. A small forge and tools for repairing and fashioning metal objects stand along one wall. The air here is oppressively hot, although no fire burns in the forge. Indeed, the bellows assembly is clearly ruined. A long, slender workbench stands before the forge, with half a dozen swords resting atop it. A rack of half-assembled or partially repaired suits of armor stands along another wall.
>
> As you are still gathering your first impressions of the room, the suits of armor begin to move toward you. Half a dozen in number, they raise dangerous weapons and make ready to attack.
>
> At this same instant, the swords on the work bench leap into the air and hang menacingly before you. One of them suddenly becomes engulfed in a sheath of flames, and a pair of brilliant pinpoints of light appear on its blade. A voice, seeming to radiate from the flaming sword, fills the room. It is a harsh and metallic sound that makes your blood run cold.
>
> "You stand in the presence of Ebonbane. I am naught but absolute evil, soft ones!" it shrieks. "Avert your eyes and kneel before me lest I make your deaths slow and painful."

Regardless of what the PCs do, Ebonbane orders its minions to attack. The suits of armor are **doom guards** (hp 40 each; other statistics at area 9). The other five swords fight with THAC0s of 15. Each hit they score inflicts 1-6 hp damage. They are treated as if they were AC 0 and will break if damaged for more than 10 hp by a single blow or spell (hits that score less damage have no effect).

Ebonbane will do nothing throughout the course of this battle apart from directing the actions of its minions. It is confident in its ability to annihilate the PCs if they get past its doom guards and dancing swords. Any attack directed at

Ebonbane will fail; the only way to provoke a response from the sentient sword is by using the four keys (see the following).

The Four Keys

Ebonbane's great weakness lies in the elements from which its current form was crafted. The key of earth has the power to rob the evil sword of the strength of its steel body. The key of air can isolate it from the power it draws from the drifting Mists of Ravenloft. The key of water has the ability to douse the evil fire of its soul with holy essence. Lastly, the key of fire contains the magical power needed to invoke the enchantments hidden in the other keys, and represents the elemental fire with which the dark blade was forged.

In order to release the power of the four keys, a single magical fire must be applied to the three other keys at once. There are many ways to do this, ranging from placing the air, earth, and water keys on the ground and launching a *flame arrow, flaming sphere,* or *fireball* at them, to having a wizard who holds the objects cast a *fire shield* spell on himself. Of course, the method involving the *fireball* would be very dangerous in an enclosed space like the workshop, but it could be done. The DM is free to decide if the means employed by the party fits the requirements described previously.

Whatever the means of immolation, the release of this power has a ghastly effect on Ebonbane. It does not, however, strip it of all its powers or destroy it. What it does do is to release the extraplanar being who was imprisoned within the sword. While its powers are greatly weakened, it is still a dangerous foe and will attack the party. When the power of the keys is invoked, read the following to the players:

> As the key of flame engulfs the other keys, a brilliant white light floods the room. It seems to drive away the dank feeling of evil that has lingered over you since you entered this strange house, and you feel a warmth such as you have not known since you were babes. As one, the suits of armor and dancing swords fall to the ground in a great crash of inert metal. In the back of your mind, you note that the distant sounds of the raging storm have faded away completely.
>
> The flaming sword Ebonbane lets out a penetrating cry of pain that almost brings back the feeling of evil, but the sound is suddenly stifled. Like the lesser blades before it, this fragment of evil falls to the flagstone floor and breaks cleanly in two. As you watch, it slowly crumbles into dust under the bombardment of the white aura surrounding the keys.
>
> In the deepest part of your souls, you hear a voice whisper, "At last the years of torment are over. I am free of this place, and the foul Ebonbane has been defeated. You have my eternal gratitude." With that final farewell, you sense that the spirit of Lady Shadowborn has slipped away from this place and that your mission here is done.

Give the PCs a few seconds to recover their senses. If they have been wounded by the swords and doom guards, they have time to cast one or two healing spells before the next event befalls them. At some point, however, they ought to be reminded (if they haven't figured it out yet) that they have no idea how to escape Ravenloft and return to their homes. When the DM decides that enough time has passed for dramatic purposes, the house begins to break apart.

> Suddenly, the ground heaves violently beneath your feet, throwing you to the hard flagstone floor. In seconds, the entire workshop seems to break up and spin off into a lingering white mist. You feel certain that you are falling, but there is nothing visible except the swirling mists and you cannot judge your movement by them. A distant, angry roar erupts from within or beyond the dancing clouds of vapor. Suddenly, a dark form bounds out of the rolling clouds and into view.
>
> It is a great and powerful looking creature composed wholly of darkness. Two burning eyes slowly turn to fix upon you, and a shiver races through your bones. Along your arms and legs you feel goose bumps rise. You can have no doubt that you are in the presence of something so evil that it defies description in mortal terms.
>
> "Soft ones," is says in a hollow, hissing voice, "you have freed Lady Shadowborn from her prison and destroyed my mortal form. Without it, I am unable to enter the physical world and claim it as my own. So be it. But now the time has come for you to pay for your actions. As you have destroyed that which I was, now I shall destroy you."

Ebonbane (spirit form): INT supra; AL CE; AC 0; MV 6; HD 11; hp 45; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA special; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; SZ M; ML 18; XP 15,000.

This spirit form is a difficult thing to battle. Although Ebonbane has been greatly weakened by the use of the four keys against him, its power is still great. Its touch causes the damage listed above (1-10 hp) and also drains a level from its target if a save vs. spells is not made. It is immune to all manner of *charm, hold, fear,* and other mind-affecting spells and can be hit by only +2 or better weapons. All spells that might affect a living body (*flesh to stone,* for example) have no power over it.

Ebonbane can also invoke spells as if it were a 10th-level wizard or priest. Although it has no need of material, somatic, or verbal components, it can cast but one spell per round and cannot take any other action while manifesting a spell effect. It is able to use spells from the schools of necromancy and alteration as well as the combat and necromantic spheres normally open only to priests. Thus, it can cast four first-level spells (*burning hands, chill touch* (×2), *shocking grasp),* four second-level spells (*continual light, darkness (15' radius), spectral hand, shatter),* three third-level spells (*cause blindness, slow, vampiric touch),* two fourth-level spells (*enervation, solid fog),* and one fifth-level spell (*flame strike)* per day.

Ebonbane can be defeated either by means of a spell such as *banishment* or *dismissal* (which does not destroy it but forces it into another part of Ravenloft and allows the party to survive the encounter), or by reducing it to 0 hp. It cannot be turned by priests but is vulnerable to spells like *trap the soul* or *temporal stasis.*

This combat takes place amid the swirling Mists of Ravenloft. Although the PCs are free to stand and walk about as normal, there is nothing for them to hide

behind and no physical object for them to use against Ebonbane.

If Ebonbane defeats the PCs (killing them all in horrible ways), it considers itself to have been avenged. If the adventurers defeat the spirit, either by killing it or driving it off, the following scene will take place:

> The dark shape that was Ebonbane fades from view. A sense of relief washes over you, and the velvety mists roll up around you like boiling water. For a brief second, you feel a wrenching inside you, like the longing for a loved one you can never see again. Then all turns dark.

After a few seconds, the PCs find that their eyes are adjusting to the lack of light. They are back in the place where they went to sleep at in the beginning of this adventure. A little investigation will reveal that no time has passed during their sojourn in the misty realms of Ravenloft. Lest the PCs decide that this was all a bad dream, their wounds and any other consequences of the adventure remain. PCs who died in Ravenloft are returned to this starting point as corpses.

Concluding the Adventure

Following the completion of this adventure, there are a number of other paths that the party may choose to explore. The following section details the most likely areas for future investigation or sequel adventures using the material and characters presented in "Bane of the Shadowborn."

Ebonbane's Return

In order to escape from Ravenloft, the party must have freed Lady Shadowborn from her curse. This does not mean that the PCs destroyed Ebonbane's spirit form, so Ebonbane may return another time to seek vengeance, or might find ways to lure the PCs to Ravenloft so it can destroy them. Without the awesome powers given it by the Mists of Ravenloft, it will rely more on cunning and treachery to battle the heroes—unless it has been made the lord of another domain and wears a different form.

The Family Tree

The PC who discovers that he is related to Lady Shadowborn may want to learn more about the roots of his family tree. This is perfectly understandable and should be possible. However, more might be buried in the past than the glory of Lady Shadowborn and her endless struggle for justice. There still exist remnants of the many evil factions that Kateri Shadowborn battled. Once it becomes obvious that someone is unusually interested in Kateri's life, new enemies may descend on the PC. Certainly a powerful paladin like Lady Shadowborn left many evil-doers with a burning desire for vengeance. Though they may be long dead, their descendants will certainly remember the "wrongs" done to their families. Other once-living foes may still be around, perhaps as liches, vampires, or similar timeless creatures.

Return to Ravenloft

Some PCs may want to know more about the strange land they have left behind. Where were they when they were in the Mists? In what strange place did they eventually end up when they found the manor house? Alas, the answers are all too easy to find—or so it seems.

Returning to Ravenloft is not difficult. The land allows almost anyone to pass through its misty borders and enter its dark domains. Once there, however, escape is seldom so simple. While the desire to learn more about this land of evil is understandable, PCs may soon find that they have stumbled across something so dark that they cannot hope to defeat it.

For those who wish to stage return adventures in Ravenloft, we recommend the purchase of the RAVENLOFT boxed set. The material presented in this product (and TSR's other RAVENLOFT products) should provide the DM with more than enough information to terrify his players on dark and stormy nights for months to come. Ω

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Continued from page 53

Combat in this tunnel can be performed only with claws, teeth, and short stabbing weapons, such as the knife, dagger, and short sword. No other weapons can be used. Beings less than 4′ in height have no penalties to their attack rolls, but those of larger size (including the berbalang) have a −2 to hit. No shields can be used, and no dexterity bonuses to armor class are allowed.

2. Tunnel. The rough hole in the floor heads downward at a steep angle. Due to the small diameter of the tunnel, a torch will quickly fill the area with smoke, making the air unbreathable. Either a lamp or a spell must provide light, or the PCs will have to travel in darkness.

The tunnel descends for 15′, then levels out for the next 20′. Take each character's movement rate and reduce it by half to find the character's tunnel-crawling rate in feet per round (thieves crawl at twice this speed). Near the middle of the level section, the adventurers encounter the skeleton of a six-legged rodent with oversized teeth. This osquip was the creator of these tunnels, and though its mate is nowhere to be found, the DM could emphasize that rodents always travel in packs (in fact, its mate escaped the berbalang and lives four miles to the east).

The tunnel turns directly upward after 20′, and the adventurers must climb 15′ up the rough tunnel walls. The base chance to climb safely is 60% (due to the tunnel's small size and abundant handholds); this chance is further modified according to the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*, page 122. A normal character's climbing rate here equals his usual movement rate in feet per round; thieves move twice as fast.

3. Inner Lair. The natural chimney opens into a 15′ × 20′cave with and 18′-high ceiling. The limestone floor is dirty and naturally uneven, and there are a few small rocks spread about the otherwise apparently empty cave. A natural spring once flowed from this room, but the berbalang plugged up the spring with rocks and debris years ago.

The berbalang's body is hidden in a niche behind one of the rocks toward the rear of the cave. If the party is not using a light source, anyone with infravision has a 35% chance to notice the heat of the berbalang's body spilling from around the rock. If the party has a light source, the chance to notice the body drops to 15% since to normal sight the creature blends with the rock.

Berbalang: INT very; AL CE; AC 6; MV 6, fly 24(B); HD 4 + 1; hp 14; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-6; SA projection; SD projection is immune to *charm, sleep, hold* spells; SZ M (6′ tall, 20′ wingspan); ML 10; XP 650 (corrected from MC, which is in error); MC.

The black, leathery-skinned berbalang attacks with its projection until the projection loses at least 5 hp. If the projection is killed before it can escape, the berbalang has a 75% of dying from the shock. Otherwise, the projection flies up to the ceiling and disappears from sight as though it were hidden. Having dissipated its projection, the berbalang's body "awakens" and awaits the party's next action. If the PCs attempt to leave, the berbalang emerges and attacks when half of the party has descended into the tunnel. It is capable of following PCs into the tunnel and fighting there, but prefers to avoid this if possible due to the cramped combat conditions there.

If the party explores the cave and approaches the berbalang's hiding place, it springs out to attack in an attempt to surprise the nearest PC (−1 penalty for PCs to avoid surprise). The berbalang fights until it has lost at least 10 hp, then it attempts to flee down the entrance tunnel. If it escapes, it flies to its next lair and, after fully recuperating, it tries to locate the PCs and exact vengeance.

If the party succeeds in killing the berbalang, a quick search of its lair reveals a partially armored skeleton still holding a dagger and a shield with a gem-studded rim. Marcella can identify the shield as belonging to Olthair. A *detect magic* spell will determine that the shield is magical. However, the magical radiation is caused by the small ruby atop the shield, not the shield itself. The gem acts as a *brooch of shielding* that can absorb 38 hp of *magic missile* spell damage before crumbling into dust.

Concluding the Adventure

If the berbalang is not killed, it will try to avenge itself on the party. This attempt need not occur immediately but can be used by the DM at a later date to surprise the PCs. In addition, the berbalang will also avenge itself on the villagers, since it attributes the cause of its current discomfort to their intervention. Finally, the villagers will obviously be disappointed at the party's failure, and will also be suspicious of them if the PCs return with treasure.

If the PCs kill the berbalang and bring back part of its body or tell the villagers where to find it, the townsmen are amazed that their "demon-spirit" was actually a mortal creature. They treat the PCs to numerous drinks at the tavern after the mayor makes a short but heartfelt speech of thanks. Lingus offers the PCs his tearful appreciation for avenging his son's death. Some townspeople will want the PCs to find the cave again, remove the human bones for burial, and seal up the entrance.

If the PCs tell Marcella the entire tale because they know she would be interested (and do not tell it with the intent of proving her wrong), if they submit to her lengthy questioning, and if they bring her part of the creature, she will reward them with a single potion of *levitation* for their story and gift. Ω

The Oops File

There are two map problems in issue #30. On the map of the Tareg Ambush ("Ghazal," page 25), several letters referred to in the text did not appear on the printed map. Please add the following letters as indicated:

—Move one square above and two squares left of the "N" that indicates north. Place an A in this square.

—Move one square down and five squares to the right of the north "N." Place a B in this square.

—Place a Z in the middle square of the column farthest to the right.

The author's original map for King's Mountain, Level 3 ("Thiondar's Legacy," page 64) was marked in hexes. During production, the map was changed to scale miles as standard for "outdoor" terrain maps, but the text was not altered to reflect this. Please make the following changes:

—Page 62, column 2, first full paragraph: ". . . (that's five **miles** on the Level Three map)."

—Pages 63-64, areas 25-28: "For every **mile traveled,** there is a 1-in-6 chance of a random encounter . . ."